

Shackled City Volume One



A Campaign Log of The Shackled City Adventure Path



Campaign Began: October 29th, 2009

Final Session Was: TBD

DUNGEON MASTER: Hank Woon

[Pathfinder Wiki](#)

[Wikipedia](#)

CHAPTERS

- **CHAPTER 1:** Life's Bazaar by Christopher Perkins – Sessions: 1-3 – Average Party Level by Completion: 2nd
- **CHAPTER 2:** Drakthar's Way by Christopher Perkins – Sessions: 3-5 – Average Party Level by Completion: 3rd
- **CHAPTER 3:** Flood Season by James Jacobs – Sessions: 5-9 – Average Party Level by Completion: 5th
- **CHAPTER 3.5:** The Gauntlet by Graeme Morris – Sessions: 9-13 – Average Party Level by Completion: 7th
- **CHAPTER 4:** The Zenith Trajectory by David Noonan – Sessions: 13-16 – Average Party Level by Completion: 8th
- **CHAPTER 4.5:** Tomb of Horrors by Gary Gygax (3.5 update by Bruce R. Cordell) – Sessions: 16-20 – Average Party Level by Completion: 9th
- **CHAPTER 5:** The Demonskar Legacy by Tito Leati – Sessions: 20-23 – Average Party Level by Completion: 10th
- **CHAPTER 6:** To be continued in [VOLUME TWO...](#)

PROLOGUE

Six hundred and fifty years ago, the Chultan Peninsula was a savage land filled with dinosaurs, dire beasts, goblinoid and yuan-ti tribes, and even demons. But then came three adventurers who would forever change the course of this land's history: Lady Sasserine, a human cleric; a human pirate, Lord Chulta; and a dwarf sorcerer of incredible skill and power, Surabar Spellmason.



SURABAR SPELLMASON

The three clear out an area along the western coast and create a settlement. Soon after they come into conflict with an ancient black dragon who had long claimed this area as her territory—Zelkarune. They manage to slay the terrible beast, but the Lady Sasserine falls with its dying breath. Surabar blames Lord Chulta's impetuosity, and after ensuring their newly found settlement would be named in her honor, he leaves, heading inland. (The peninsula on which this campaign takes place, Chultan, was named centuries later after Lord Chulta by Pirate Lords who ruled over the peninsula for a time and who claimed to be descendants from the famed rogue.)



SURUBAR BATTLES THE DRAGON

Surabar quickly gathered a loyal following as he traveled deeper inland, taming the wilds from dinosaurs, dire beasts of all kinds, and tribes of yuan-ti who infested the wild jungles.

With his followers he founded the city of Redgorge, a large town planted on the top of a tall hill surrounded by river valleys with strong defensive features. Soon after, Surabar was visited by the arch-angel Nidrama, who warned him that the Demon Lord Demogorgon had his sights on the peninsula, and that it was up to Surabar to stop him from creating a rift and pouring into the Material Plane with his fiendish hosts. With the guidance of the angel, Surabar stopped Demogorgon's plot before it could begin.

Furious, Demogorgon sent one of his chief lieutenants, a glabrezu named Nabthatoron, to destroy Surabar and Redgorge. Nabthatoron gained entry to the Material Plane through the Demonskar—a huge crater in the earth, far to the west of Redgorge. The Demonskar was the site of a city of spell weavers over a thousand years ago. When they attempted to build a city that could transport between planes, they accidentally unleashed a surge of Abyssal energies that obliterated the city, leaving behind an enormous crater and an anchor to the Abyss through which demons could gain entry into our plane of existence.

After Nabthatoron arrived, it began bringing more demons into the realm until it had an army. He then marched on Redgorge, determined to wipe it off the map. But Surabar had time to prepare, and the city withstood the siege from the demonic legions for seven years, until finally Nidrama once again appeared and gave Surabar the powerful artifact—a magical staff called Alakast. With it, Surabar dueled Nabthatoron atop the walls of Redgorge, finally striking the demon true with Alakast. The power of the holy staff left Nabthatoron terribly weakened, and it fled before it could be destroyed. With their master routed, the rest of the demonic host scattered, melting away into the jungles of Chult. For his failure, Nabthatoron was banished by Demogorgon to the Material Plane for all of eternity, and some say the powerful demon rules over the Demonskar to this day. Eventually the population of Redgorge outgrew the confines of its walls, so Surabar founded another city just to the north, in the throat of a dormant volcano, its deep crater a dark, still lake (a lake that some say is haunted by a terrible monster that Surabar defeated when he first arrived, though others say the Crater Lake Monster is just a myth). Cauldron's walls are 50 feet tall, crafted from dark-green malachite mined from deep beneath the city.

Six hundred and fifty years later...

DALLEN YADWRICK

DALLEN YADWRICK WAS BORN RAYLEN SALMAER IN Priador, the coastal region of Thay, in the port city of Thasselen to an Illuskan mother and Mulanese father. His mother worked in a brothel near the docks, and his father was an accomplished wizard and illusionist specialist who never gave the whore's bastard a thought.

Hoping to give the boy a better life, Dallen's mother gave him his father's last name and taught him the ways of his father's people (to the best of her ability). The Red Wizards cared little of the rantings from a filthy dock whore, or whom she expected her son to one day become. In the end, Dallen's name only caused him suffering in Thasselen; full-blooded Mulanese boys knew the name and knew he was no inheritor. They could not tolerate a bastard going about with it and so beat him regularly to remind him that he would never rise above his Illuskan blood. Enough was enough. When he was nine years old, Dallen stowed aboard the Falcon's Wing, a Thayan merchant ship. He spent three days at sea before being discovered and put to work as a swab. He was kicked off the ship in Airspur (the captain deemed him unlucky). He took to the streets, alight with excitement from the new adventure he was on. It wasn't long before other urchins found him, beat him, and robbed him of his meager belongings. He found a job stoking the fire of a local blacksmith, Dallen Craiskin. It was hard, sweaty work and it paid little. He eventually saved up enough silver to buy a nice dagger; it was a good thing, too, since it wasn't long after when the band of ruffians attacked him once again. This time the young leader earned a dagger in his belly for his troubles. The other children feared him and fled.



Time passed. Rather than taking to his new job, which was a fine opportunity and could have led to a very respectable career, the young Dallen found the work very dull. Eventually he approached the street ruffians; now respecting Dallen, they let him join their gang. Dallen took to his new lifestyle with enthusiasm, determined to make a living from the rooftops of the city. He led a successful double life—a blacksmith's apprentice by day and a city ruffian by night—for two years.

Bosun was the biggest and clumsiest, but he was also the most ambitious of the group. He had been a witness to a large chest arriving late one night at the docks, unloaded for one of the more affluent merchants in the city. Knowing how miserly the merchant was and that he relied more on subterfuge than strongmen to guard his property, Bosun devised a plan to steal the chest. Being a young lad of 11, Dallen didn't know any better than to think Bosun's idea was both clever and wise. Indeed, all the young children believed so, and the thought of the endless wealth they all were sure they would soon have had them chatting excitedly to not only each other, but other street urchins. This boasting did not take long to reach the merchant. Bosun was captured and tortured to death, but before he died he gave up his friends. Dallen was a clever liar, and with the help of his mentor blacksmith, he got away with only a beating. However, his apprentice knew he lied, and so sent him packing. Having had enough of Chessenta, the young Dallen decided to head to the open sea again. Having learned his lesson about playing the stowaway, Dallen found a ship that was in need of a crewman, and at the age of 11, he sailed the Inner Sea once again, this time under a new name: Dallen Yadwick. For the next five years, he sailed on the *Perfect Sapphire* under Captain Shetta Gladuur. Dallen started as a cabin boy and earned his way up to carpenter's apprentice, having the honor of painting the hull of the ship its brilliant red and repairing handrails and masts. He took to rigging as though he was born to it, yet the excitement he craved so long ago on the streets of Airspur eluded him. After five years and many adventures with good friends and brave allies, the 16-year-old Dallen took port in Procampur, bidding a fond farewell with his eyes set on the Pirate Isles.

OLO FATCH



He was immediately swept into Graystreets, the poor district of Procampur. It wasn't long before he was heavily involved in the local black market, hoping to find a smuggler willing to take him to the Pirate Isles. That smuggler turned out to be Olo Fatch, a half-orc sea captain of a small vessel, *the Black Eel*.

Olo sized up the young man and set him to work until the next time he called port on Dragonisle. Olo liked Dallen, so he kept Dragonisle as his last port of call. He put Dallen's fearless nature in ports throughout the Sea of Fallen Stars to good use. It was five months from the day he set sail with *the Black Eel* when he returned to his home, Thasselen, smuggling magical items out of Thay. Narrowly avoiding capture and receiving a magic missile blast to the back that nearly ended his young life, Dallen started to think that his adventuring days would be over before they had a chance to really begin. Seeing the young man in such a state, Olo promised to get Dallen to the Dragonisle. His arrival in Immurk's Hold was not what he expected. Excitement he craved, but the city was a devilish roar of society's dregs. He was not in town for even three nights before being beset by an alley gang. However, Shetta and Olo had taught him a thing or two during his time with them, and he was able to turn the first attacker's own starknife on him, tearing open his throat. When he turned to face the others, their courage fled, just as with the alley rats back in Airspur. That's when Dallen realized that if you take out the leader, the rest was easy. He also realized, while appraising his newly acquired starknife, that weapons were cheaper when you took them from the dead.

Life in Immurk's Hold was grueling; he took turns stealing, fighting, working odd jobs, gambling, and drinking. He made good friends and had some good times, but he longed to resume his sailing. But he remained in Immurk's Hold for some time. Eventually he helped form a talented gang of rogues and scallywags who ended up being more concerned with eating, fighting, and fornicating than the greater ambitions of the other gangs. That didn't make the other gangs less covetous of what little they had, however. Dallen and his two best men, Grenl and Hadoc, were ambushed by a rival gang one night. Though they fought well, only Dallen remained standing amongst the carnage. Watching at the edge of an alley was a Chessentan man wearing a cocky smirk on his scarred face. This was Captain Hyveer Moorstaak, drunk from rum, and leading a group of rough looking thugs who stood with their swords drawn. Hyveer was a pirate, and the men Dallen had just killed were some of his prospects. Ready to fight to the death, Dallen leveled his rapier and starknife at them. Hyveer laughed and tossed Dallen a chunk of half-eaten cheese.



CAPTAIN HYVEER

It turned out that Hyveer was no bloodthirsty pirate ready to exact revenge. He was a displaced noble and privateer, forced to live life as a common pirate. The two toughest of his men, Urakeer and Lerthan, were his former men-at-arms and personal bodyguards. Since Dallen had just killed the men he was about to hire he asked the young swashbuckler to join his band instead. Dallen agreed.



SULDRE OF THAY

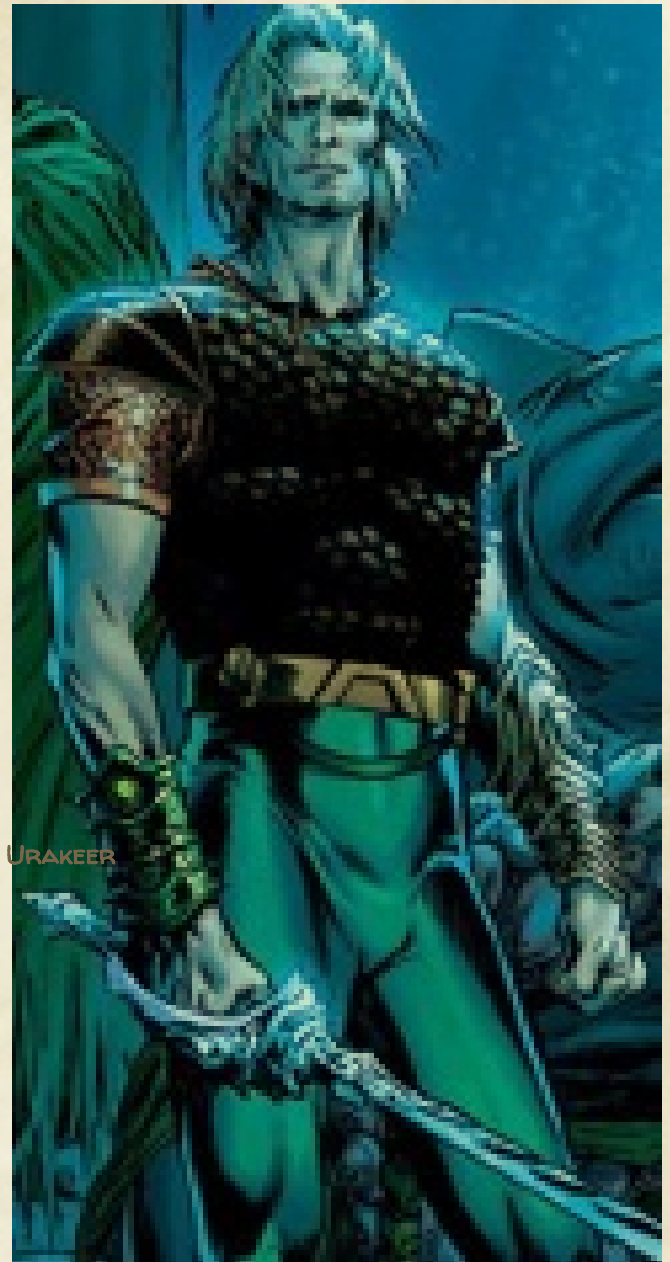
Hyveer spent most of his time in his quarters aboard his vessel, poring over writs and proclamations, sorting through trade routes and shipping manifests and plotting strategic raids. Hyveer had a special hatred of Chessentan merchant ships from the Vilhon Extents Trading Company. Hyveer sometimes teamed up with fellow pirate and privateer, Suldre of Thay. Suldre was mysterious and cruel, and when the two teamed up, she was the one calling the shot and taking most of the loot. Time passed, until a stretch of months came without a single successful raid. With his crew growing impatient after Hyveer had let a fat merchant ship slip his grasp near Lyrabar, the captain impetuously attacked a ship near Arrabar, deep within the Vilhon Reach. The ship turned out to be filled with slavers—and tough ones. Hyveer and his crew were no match. After being knocked unconscious during the ensuing battle, Dallen awoke to find himself below decks in shackles. After the ship docked at an unknown port, Dallen and many other slaves were shuffled off in a cramped wagon, which was magically silenced so the cries of the slavers' illegal cargo would go unheard. For an eternity they shambled along dry and dusty roads until finally the light of a thousand suns stabbed painfully into the huddled group's eyes. Three drow stood before them; what happened next was a blur of spells and steel. In the confusion, Dallen threw himself through door after door, frantically, until he reached a cool evening street. Later, when he returned, he found the caravan guards dead, and the slaves and the drow gone. He reclaimed his starknife and rapier, searched the dead guards for coin and clothing, and then fled into the night. The city of Innarlith seemed little concerned by a foreigner in baggy, mismatched clothing and none paid Dallen too much notice. Confused and overwhelmed, Dallen traveled by day about the city, staying well clear of the shadows. He soon found his way to the docks along the Lake of Steam. Large, green-hued gulls the size of geese floated lazily over the few docked ships. A warm mist rose from the foul-smelling yellow waters of the lake as far as the eye could see. The ships all had fortified hulls. Dallen approached the worst-looking of the ships and a woman directing two workers removing a heavily damaged bulwark. She turned out to be Reesha yr Grebai el Mussah, from Calimshan, first mate aboard the Weeping Pearl, captained by Agriad yn Nurrel el Sabin, also hailing from Calimshan. As Dallen had guessed, they were short on crew and accepted his offer for help. They explained that ship mainly sailed back and forth between Yeshpek and Innarlith, braving the treacherous waters of the Lake of Steam.



REESHA

When repairs were complete, they set course. On the second day, they spotted a pod of black dolphins; Dallen was informed that these were a sign of good luck. That luck almost held out. They nearly made it to the end of their journey without peril, but they were attacked by a warband of kuo-toa. Fortunately, Captain Agriad had a skilled crew, and they were able to dispatch the threat with little loss. Upon arrival in Yeshpek, Dallen took to the caravans that were owned by Captain Agriad and run by his son, Adapesh yn Agriad el Sabin. As they were destined for the Calimshan-port-city of Almraiven and the Shining Sea, Dallen hoped to acquire passage with pirates once he arrived. It was not as easy as he had hoped. He was stranded in Almraiven for nearly two months before he stumbled upon Urakeer, Hyveer's former guardsmen. Urakeer had escaped the slaver attack, though he had changed a lot since their last meeting. He had lost his hand and parted ways with Hyveer, who had returned to the coasts of Chessenta. Lerthan, Dallen was sad to learn, had been slain. Urakeer was now serving aboard a ship named the Farclip, captained by a brooding fighter-mage hailing from up north, near Waterdeep. His name was

Captain Ultha Grans. Urakeer and Lerthan had both left Hyveer's crew and followed the slavers south, hoping to free their shipmates. When they were unable to find them, they had joined Ultha's crew after meeting him in Innarlith. They pirated for a group called the Runden, which was a highly influential and secret trade consortium that often hired pirates to harass unaffiliated merchants. Lerthan had been killed in an attempt on a large Lantan shipping fleet.



After Urakeer put in a good word for him, Dallen joined Captain Ultha Grans, who was not known for fairness, compassion, or tolerance. A cruel and vile man, Ultha always left a wake of blood behind his ship as he navigated throughout the Shining Sea. He was a salt-mad blood pirate who liked the killing more than the loot, and he split open his own crew as happily as his prey. Dallen's quick wit and speed with his weapons kept the captain off his back. The crew aboard the Far Clip (or as it was known to its victims—the Bloodied Whore) were not much better than their captain. They often fought amongst themselves, and it was only the terror instilled by the captain that kept them from total anarchy.

Dallen lost count of which he killed more of, merchant guards or fellow crewmen. But Dallen did make some fast friends aboard ship: Drace Arlica (note: the pistol-wielding human fighter played by Craig Guarisco), Yrlael yr Meesha el Hevenble (a half-elven Calimshite woman), Murthak Greycloaks (a dwarf from the East Rift), and of course, his old friend and comrade, Urakeer. The five of them made a tough and united front to keep peace aboard *the Bloodied Whore*, which helped keep the crew in check. It wasn't long before Urakeer found himself as First Mate. Dallen spent a majority of his earliest and most profitable days harassing Border Kingdoms along the eastern shores of the Shining Sea and selling goods to the Runderen. Ultha also took frequent, special trips throughout the Chultan Peninsula, trading in rare magic. His favored haunt was the port city of Sasserine, along the Wild Coast. Whenever they stopped at port, they would frequent the Skinned Man tavern in the Shadowshores district. Almraiven and Sasserine were Captain Ultha's two major stopping points. Urakeer told Dallen he believed it may be for the magic schools in the

respective cities.



Eventually, Captain Ultha shrugged off the manacles of Ultha Grans his employers, the Rundeen, and started raiding shipments he knew to be protected by them, his greed and hunger for loot, magic, and power outweighing any sense of consequence. Urakeer objected and was left ashore on the western side of Tharsult for his troubles. After that, Murthak was promoted to First Mate. It wasn't long after when the Rundeen conspired with the Sasserine authorities and laid a trap for the pirates. When *the Bloodied Whore* came into port, the ambush was sprung, and nearly the entire crew were killed or captured. Dallen saw Murthak go down with a bolt in his left eye, and Yrlael raped on deck and her throat opened. Drace leapt overboard after he ran out of bullets. Dallen would have followed suit, but a solid blow to the base of his skull sent him into blackness. When he awoke, he along with many of his crewmen, and Captain Ultha, were in a Sasserine dungeon. They were tried in a public court. The Captain and a few of the others were hanged, and Dallen and the rest were beaten and branded. The brand, they were warned, meant banishment from Sasserine for life under pain of death. Heading north, Dallen soon met up with a young human sorceress named Seoni, who was traveling with a female gnome druid named Lini. They were bound for the city of Cauldron, which was further inland, in the depths of the crawling jungles that characterize the Chultan peninsula. Dallen realized that though he loved the high seas, it wasn't the life of a pirate that had called to him all these years, but the call of the unknown that made life exciting. There was something about Seoni that reminded him of Shetta, his former mentor and captain of *the Perfect Sapphire*. It was this nostalgic connection that created a bond with his new companions, and he immediately felt protective of them. The three had a few tough scrapes on their long overland journey to Cauldron. They were only in town for a week when they learned that citizens of Cauldron were being kidnapped in the middle of the night. Since the local authorities had no leads, the three of them one night decided to do some investigating...



DALLEN'S JOURNEYS

On the following page is a map highlighting Dallen's journeys prior to the start of Session One. The bluish-gray line was him as a stowaway at age 9; pink is with Captain Shetta; green is with Olo Fatch; gold is onboard the privateer ship; the overland route is as a captured slave; purple is with the *Weeping Pearl*; red is with Captain Ultha and the *Bloodied Whore*; and finally blue is the overland trek from Sasserine to Cauldron, and the start of the **Shackled City Campaign**.



CHAPTER ONE: LIFE'S BAZAAR

Server started.

Dallen Yadwick connected.



SEONI

It's about time you got here, **Dallen**. We've been waiting in the rain all night.



LINI

I don't know... I kind of like the rain...

DALLEN

Me too. It washes away the dirt.

SEONI

Very funny.

LINI

It's unlikely we're going to find anything tonight... not in this weather...



DUNGEON MASTER

"A wretched drizzle falls from the ash-gray sky. The crowded, rain-slicked buildings seem especially bleak and frightful this evening, hunched together beneath gloomy skies. A few lights burn in their windows, but mostly their shutters have been closed for the night. The scent of chimney smoke fills the air, and the din of water trundles from the rooftops, splashing in dark alleys and turning street gutters into rivulets."



They travel up the road a ways, searching for clues related to the recent string in kidnappings that have plagued the citizens of Cauldron...

DUNGEON MASTER

A scream for help suddenly splits the night air...



DALLEN

Where does it come from?

DUNGEON MASTER

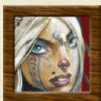
Just ahead and to the left. It sounds like it's coming from the alley...

DALLEN

I go toward the sound.

DUNGEON MASTER

You stand at the mouth of a darkened alley...



DALLEN

We should proceed with caution...

DUNGEON MASTER

They see you. The one closest turns and says...

SEONI

The screams are coming from down there!

DALLEN

What do I see?

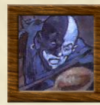


DALLEN

We should proceed with caution.

DUNGEON MASTER

They see you. The one closest turns and says...



THUG 3

Mind your own business!

DALLEN

Hey, if there's going to be a beating, I will do the administering.

THUG 1

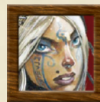
Get out of here while we still let you, punk!

DALLEN

I'm not going anywhere.

THUG 2

You can leave the women, though-hah!



SEONI

Not very polite at all.

LINI

No...

DALLEN

You've no idea what I lied about to get 'em here!

CAMPAIGN NOTE

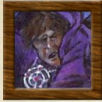
When we first began this campaign, we used *Pathfinder 1st Edition* and set it in Golarion (I had just stopped working at Paizo when we began this campaign, and 1st Edition—which I worked on—was just recently released). We would later switch to *The Forgotten Realms* (Faerun), and *D&D 5e*.

In the beginning, it was just Justin playing Dallen, so I roleplayed some of the Pathfinder iconics as NPCs (beginning here with Seoni and Lini). Justin is excellent as both a player and DM himself, so this was still a lot of fun—but of course, I prefer more live players. Many would come and go throughout this campaign.

One final quick note—Justin began with a top-down token, which you will see in some screenshots coming up. But halfway through this first chapter he switched to the token you see representing him in the dialogue.

THUG 3

Hah! Well then take them with you when you go, by all means.



RUPHOS

No, please... help me!!!

DALLEN

Rescuing the man in distress usually isn't my thing, but I do like to fight an alley rat.

THUG 3

Rat, is it?!

DALLEN

I didn't stutter! (Move in to fight.)

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll for initiative!

Dallen Yadwrick rolls: $1d20 + 4 \Rightarrow 6 + 4 = 10$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+1 \Rightarrow 14 + 1 = 15$ for Lini.

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 16 + 2 = 18$ for Seoni.

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20 \Rightarrow 19$ for the villains.

DUNGEON MASTER

The painted rogues rush in to attack, their short swords leaving their scabbards with a harsh *hiss*!



Roll for initiative!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 4 + 2 = 6$ for Thug 1.

DUNGEON MASTER

Swing and a miss!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 4 + 2 = 6$ for Thug 2.

DUNGEON MASTER

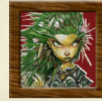
Another miss!

DALLEN

Do I know this Ruphos?

DUNGEON MASTER

Probably not.



Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 11 + 2 = 13$ for Lini.

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d3-2 \Rightarrow 3 - 2 = 1$ damage.

DUNGEON MASTER

The sling bullet whistles through the air, bouncing off his shoulder for 1 point of damage! Seoni can't cast a spell without provoking, so she attacks with her quarterstaff.

DALLEN

Amusingly, I still need scratch paper!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20-1 \Rightarrow 11 - 1 = 10$



DUNGEON MASTER

She misses! The rogue blocks her clumsy swing easily with the flat of his blade. Your turn!



DALLEN

I am just going to attack the guy in front of me with my rapier, no two attacks.

Dallen rolls: $1d20+5 \Rightarrow 3 + 5 = 8$

DALLEN

Wow.

DUNGEON MASTER

Well, we're off to a great start!

VIRTUAL TABLETOP

Justin and I both began playing roleplaying games in 1990, with *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 2nd Edition*. This campaign was both of our first experience with a virtual tabletop. We started with [MapTool](#), which actually lasted a majority of this campaign (as you'll see, if you keep reading). There was a bit of a learning curve, but we soon got the hang of it.

Eventually, the bad guys get to go, and they start delivering some hurt!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d6+1 \Rightarrow 4 + 1 = 5$

DUNGEON MASTER

5 points of damage!

DALLEN

That's half my life.

DUNGEON MASTER

Don't forget your Con bonus to hps, and the houserule of bonus hps.

DALLEN

A quarter of my life.

THUG 1

You stay right there, priest!

DUNGEON MASTER

Lini uses her sling again.

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 3 + 2 = 5$

DUNGEON MASTER

Miss!

DALLEN

Don't you have spells or something?

LINI

There aren't enough vines here...

DALLEN

Vines? ***Vines?!*** I'm bleeding over here!

The battle continues for several rounds; the fighting is tough, and both Seoni and Dallen take 50%+ of their total hps in damage. Until finally...

Dallen rolls: $1d20 + 5 \Rightarrow 9 + 5 = 14$

DUNGEON MASTER

Hit.

Dallen rolls: $1d6+1 \Rightarrow 6 + 1 = 7$

DALLEN

YES.



THUG 2

Aarrgh...! (Drops dead.)

THUG 3

You bastard!

DUNGEON MASTER

He attacks you.

DALLEN

(To Thug 3) He asked for it!

A couple rounds later, and the second of the trio drops. The third turns and flees for his life.

DALLEN

Hey, wait!

DUNGEON MASTER

He doesn't listen.

DALLEN

We barely got to know each other...

DUNGEON MASTER

You hear a voice calling...

JIL

You may consider this a victory!

DALLEN

Where?



JIL

But the priest lives because we wish it so, not because of your misplaced bravado!

DALLEN

What's with the makeup, huh?

DUNGEON MASTER

She ignores your remark, instead pointing a baleful finger and Ruphus and saying...

JIL

Take these words back to your temple, priest! The children are lost and no longer your concern.

DUNGEON MASTER

She vanishes behind the roof, dropping from sight.

RUPHOS

Please... please help me...

DALLEN

Are both thugs dead?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes; the second one bled to death.

DALLEN

I search them. Ladies, help the priest. I'll handle this. It's man's work.

**SEONI**

Your usual charming self.

LINI

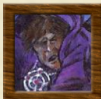
(To Ruphos) There, there... it's all right...

DALLEN

So why'd they attack you, lubber?

DUNGEON MASTER

The two thugs have short swords and 7 gp each.

**RUPHOS**

At first, I thought they meant to mug me... but it soon became clear that they wished to intimidate me...

DALLEN

These fit okay in my backpack... (He mumbles to himself). Uh-huh, go on.

RUPHOS

Please, escort me back to my temple.

DALLEN

(Taking the short swords and gold.) Of course.

**DUNGEON MASTER**

The short swords might fetch a reasonable price here in town.

DALLEN

How far is that? You looking for these children or something, Lubber?

RUPHOS

Yes... I just came from the orphanage... asking questions... my temple is not too far... I was just heading back when they jumped me....

SEONI

We can escort you, father.

RUPHOS

Thank you... thank you, my child...

**DALLEN**

So who are these guys? How'd they know you were asking questions at the orphanage? Why do they have painted face?

RUPHOS

I know not... But they are thugs from the Last Laugh, the most dominant thieves' guild in Cauldron...

DALLEN

How many thieves' guilds does this pit have?

RUPHOS

Not as many as before... Recently, the Last Laugh became the most dominant, after driving out the Hill Folk and Alleybashers....

DALLEN

Yeah, that didn't work out for them tonight. They have a base? And who was the rooftop basher?

RUPHOS

I know nothing else of those rogues... villains, the lot of them... (spits a glob of bloody phlegm).

DALLEN

Hmph... Well you know enough they want you quiet? It'd be wise of you to find out more of these rogues. In the meantime, let's get out of here. I think this one may have shit himself (kicks the dead man at his feet).

The party escorts Ruphos back to his church, which isn't far. His comrades grant Dallen a healing potion, which he sorely needs. Next, they decide to investigate the Lantern Street Orphanage...



GRETCHYN

(Suspicious) Can I help you?

DALLEN

Yeah, a priest was just here. Got himself ambushed by a couple thugs in alley on his way 'ome.

GRETCHYN

Oh dear, is he all right?

DALLEN

Yeah, thanks to these two fine ladies.

SEONI

Sigh.

LINI

You're welcome.

GRETCHYN

... I ... see. Well, what can I do for you?

DALLEN

Well, why was he here? (Giver her 7 gps.)

GRETCHYN

Thank you... your contribution will help the children. He was asking about the children. Three have been kidnapped recently. There was no sign of forced entry.



DUNGEON MASTETR

Roll Diplomacy.

Dallen rolls: 1d20+4 => 11 + 4 = 15

GRETCHYN

Please, feel free to walk around. Just don't frighten the children.

SEONI

Sounds good. We'll split up.

LINI

Yes...

DALLEN

Do you have any tea?

GRETCHYN

Certainly. This way...

DALLEN

(Follow her.)

GRETCHYN

Temar, make this gentleman your finest tea.

TEMAR FLAGONSTERN

Er, yes, ma'am.

DALLEN

I know not the difference. What everyone else drinks is fine. You must be the cook. Fine thing you do here.

TEMAR FLAGONSTERN

Er, um... thanks.

GRETCHYN

If you'll excuse me, I have business to attend.

Gretchyn leaves Dallen to his investigation.

DALLEN

While the tea is steeping, I'll wander over and talk to that flower boy.

VARIN

Hello. Wow, were you in a fight?

DALLEN

Yeah. Protecting the father, mate.

VARIN

Your father?

DALLEN

Nah, the cleric who was here earlier. The priest. You know him?

VARIN

Why would someone try to hurt a priest?

DALLEN

That's what we're tryin' to find out. Some thugs with painted faces. Seems they know somethin' 'bout the kids that went missin'.

VARIN

Oh. I hope they find our friends soon.

DALLEN

Yeah, that's the plan. You see anythin' you want to tell me?

VARIN

No... I'm sorry...

DALLEN

Mayhaps you know someone who does?

VARIN

Mmmmm... (thinking hard)... Have you spoken with Gretchyn?

DALLEN

Eh, Temar, how's that tea comin' along? Steeped?

TEMAR FLAGONSTERN

Er, yeah... here... hot...

DALLEN

Hey, you. (Directed at that dwarf.)

JAROMIR COPPERBEARD

Eh? It be me you're speakin'?

DALLEN

Aye, lubber. See anythin' a swab like me might be interested in? Concernin' those missin' children?

JAROMIR COPPERBEARD

Just what I've been tellin' folks! No sign of forced entry. It's like they just walked through the walls!

DALLEN

Ghosts?

JAROMIR COPPERBEARD

Maybe! I don't know what the ghosts be wantin' with the children, but...

DALLEN

Where was the last child last seen?

JAROMIR COPPERBEARD

Upstairs, tucked in for the night. Just like the others. Door was locked—from the *outside*.

DALLEN

Thanks, lubber. Keep an ear to the ground.

JAROMIR COPPERBEARD

Aye.

Dallen wanders around, questioning NPCs (and flirting with some). After he plays a game of hide and seek with one young girl, he finds out something interesting...



Dallen rolls his Perception: 1d20 +7 => 7 + 7 = 14

MARIA

Hehehehe! You found me!

DALLEN

Aye, I did. You are as quiet as a wee cutpurse! What's yer name, master thief?

MARIA

Maria

DALLEN

Well, Maria, who sleeps upstairs?

MARIA

Mmm, a bunch of people. But some were taken.

DALLEN

I've heard; I think you've nothing to worry about with your cleverness.

MARIA

Hehe.

DALLEN

You give me a name of one of the wee ones that sleeps upstairs?

MARIA

My friend Evelyn.

DALLEN

Can you take me to her? Perhaps you can teach her your secret art of hiding?



MARIA

She was taken away. I hope she comes back soon.

DALLEN

Me too. Perhaps she is just really good at hiding.

MARIA

Maybe! Maybe she is tricking the adults!

DALLEN

Maybe...

MARIA

But I saw a monster.

DALLEN

A monster you say? (LEAN in close.) Like a big, mean man?

MARIA

(whisper): Yes! But he was scary.

DALLEN

Scary how? Did he paint his face?

MARIA

No, he had no face... only eyes...

DALLEN

(Shudder.)

MARIA

And he carried something shiny in his hands. I saw him go upstairs...

DALLEN

Like a sword?

MARIA

No. It was small.



DALLEN

Did he come in the front door?

MARIA

Yes. I pretended I was asleep, so he did not see me. Because if you shut your eyes, monsters can't see you.

DALLEN

You are a clever little girl. Screaming scares them away, too.

MARIA

Really? Then next time I will scream then. I can scream loud.

DALLEN

That's good. Then hide like you did from me.

MARIA

Okay! (She grins.)

DALLEN

No one will find you.

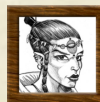
MARIA

I know. I'm the bestest hider!

DALLEN

(laughs) The bestest for sure!

Dallen returned to Gretchyn after learning this news...



GRETCHYN

Did you find what you are looking for?

DALLEN

An orphanage that has problem with midnight adoptions. You hear anything about the thief?

GRETCHYN

What thief?

DALLEN

An orphanage that has problem with midnight adoptions. You hear anything about the thief?

GRETCHYN

You believe it's a thief who is behind all of these kidnappings in town?

DALLEN

I'd hoped so, but wee Maria over there says the creature has not a face, and came in through the front door.

GRETCHYN

Well, Maria has an overactive imagination. There were no signs of forced entry, and if a thief picked the lock, there would have been evidence—scrapes, scratches, something around the locks. There are not.

DALLEN

Well maybe you've got copies of the keys floatin' around. And a good thief can pick the finest lock without so much as a scratch...

GRETCHYN

Not likely. The only person who has masters of our locks and keys is Keygan, who made them for us.

DALLEN

And he be the locksmith of the town?

GRETCHYN

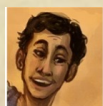
Yes. The best.

Armed with this knowledge, Dallen decided to leave no stone unturned, and so continued until he had spoken with each NPC in the orphanage. One of the last was a young boy chasing two dogs...



DALLEN

'ello there, young man.



ANDRO

Get back here, you dumb dogs!

YIPPERS & MUTT

Ruff!

DALLEN

How long you had these dogs?

ANDRO

Maybe a month.

DALLEN

Where do these mongrels sleep?

ANDRO

In the kitchen. We keep them locked in there, because otherwise they get out and pee places.

DALLEN

Yeah? Who locks 'em in there?

ANDRO

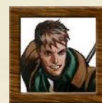
The janitor.

DALLEN

Hmmmm... What good's a dog if he can't protect ya?

ANDRO

(Shrugs.)



DALLEN

Exactly.

Dallen then moved on to find the janitor...



PATCH

Eh?

DALLEN

Mind if I come in, lubber?

PATCH

Uh, I guess not. Who are you?

DALLEN

What's yer task?

PATCH

I'm the janitor.

DALLEN

Name's Dallen, and I am just making a donation. What's yer name?

PATCH

You can call me Patch.

DALLEN

Well Patch, I've got a few questions for ya, ya mind?

PATCH

Uh, go ahead?

DALLEN

You see the kidnapper?

PATCH

Uh..... no.

**DUNGEON MASTER**

Roll Sense Motive.

Dallen rolls: 1d20+3 => 8 + 3 = 11

DUNGEON MASTER

He seems nervous.

DALLEN

Hey, mate—what about them mongrel dogs, huh? Mess makers. Make your life hard, I bet.

PATCH

Yeah. Damn dogs peeing all over.

DALLEN

(Rest my hand on his shoulder.) You keep them locked in the kitchen? Prevent them from makin' a mess?

PATCH

That's right.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll Sense Motive.

Dallen rolls: 1d20+3 => 12 + 3 = 15

DUNGEON MASTER

He's hiding something.

DALLEN

(OOC) There's a door?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes.

DALLEN

A lubber'd be better off havin' those kids clean up after them mutts! (Laugh... and swing the door closed.)

PATCH

Er...

DALLEN

I don't know what you're hiding, but I don't mess around at all. You can yell you can scream, but I guarantee you'll talk before help arrives.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll Intimidate. You get a bonus from your pirate scar.

Dallen rolls: 1d20+8 => 3 + 8 = 11

PATCH

L... I don't know what you're talking about!

DALLEN

(Grab him by the shirt.) These children need our help! Whatever kind of monster you are, I am worse!

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll again.

Dallen rolls: 1d20+8 => 13 + 8 = 21

PATCH

They said they wouldn't hurt 'em!

DALLEN

I ain't makin' you the same promise. Out with it!

PATCH

They just gave me a few gold to make sure the dogs were put away and to let them know the lay of the place, that's all!

DALLEN

HOW MUCH!!! How much is the life of a child too you?!

PATCH

They aren't gonna hurt them! I think they might be taking them to their real parents! They kept saying something about the kids' parents...

DALLEN

(Let him go. Smooth out his shirt.) How much.

PATCH

10 gold...

DALLEN

(Hand him 12 GP.) Here's 12 GPs; the dogs sleep by the front door. YOU are responsible for these children. If another goes missing (slice my finger across my throat).

PATCH

(He accepts the gold, in shock.) Yeah... yeah, okay man... yeah...

DALLEN

I won't say a thing to Gretchyn.

PATCH

Tha... thank you.

DALLEN

And you will keep up your job. Take care of these children.

PATCH

I will...

DALLEN

(Pat his shoulder.) Good man, Patch. Good man.

After this encounter, Dallen met back up with Seoni and Lini in the entryway.

DALLEN

So, ladies, find any leads?

SEONI

Nothing useful, I'm afraid. You?

**LINI**

Nothing...

DALLEN

Keygan, the locksmith, a faceless man that may have had a key, and that ugly half-orc janitor was paid off to lock the dogs up.

LINI

That's not nice...

SEONI

Hm... Keygan. But we should do something about that half-orc, first.

**DALLEN**

NO. Don't worry, I promised to kill him if another child went missing

SEONI

Sigh.

LINI

That's good.

SEONI

How many people have you promised to kill since I've known you? More than you've actually met, that's how many.

DALLEN

Well the world would be a better place if I'd killed most of them.

SEONI

Well. Should we go see this locksmith?

DALLEN

Yes.

The three then traveled straight to Keygan's locks...



KEYGAN

KEYGAN GHELVE

Can I help you?

DALLEN

Maybe you can, lubber. You make keys?

KEYGAN GHELVE

Why, yes! It's my specialty!

DALLEN

We've come to the right place. (Turn and nod to the ladies.)

DUNGEON MASTER

Seoni nods back. Lini is staring at the fire.

DALLEN

We just came from the orphanage. Seems they have an issue with their doors staying locked.



DUNGEON MASTER

He turns pale white.



KEYGAN GHELVE

Re-really? That's... terrible...

DALLEN

I know. (Lean onto the counter.)

KEYGAN GHELVE

I, uh, well, I stand by my work. I can fix their locks, for free! (nervous laughter)

DALLEN

Fix?

KEYGAN GHELVE

I mean, make sure they aren't broken! And that, uh, that they stay shut!

DUNGEON MASTER

The gnome motions behind him, beyond the curtain.

KEYGAN GHELVE

Uh... I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about, sir!

DUNGEON MASTER

He motions again.

DALLEN

Hm... (Reach out and grab him.)

KEYGAN GHELVE

Ack!

DALLEN

LISTEN TO ME! I will make certain you never touch a lock again. WHO has that key?? (Smash my fist down on his hand.)

KEYGAN GHELVE

(Screams!) I don't know what you're talking about! (He points again back behind his curtain.)

DALLEN

(Drag him toward the fireplace and toss him at the chair, then jump up on the counter...)



DALLEN

Dallen: (...and draw my sword.) (OOC) Can I move the curtain out of the way with my sword?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes.

DALLEN

(OOC) Take out my starknife and jump through the curtain!

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, roll your Perception.

Dallen rolls: 1d20-1 => 15 - 1 = 14

DUNGEON MASTER

You don't see anything.

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+3 => 8 + 3 = 11

DALLEN

I'm blind!

DUNGEON MASTER

A crossbow bolt flies past your face, striking the curtain to your right with a dull *thwap!*

DALLEN

From where?

DUNGEON MASTER

A being seems to materialize from nowhere...



DUNGEON MASTER

Roll for initiative!



Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 2 + 2 = 4$ for the skulk.

Dallens rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 10 + 4 = 14$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 16 + 2 = 18$ for Seoni.

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+1 \Rightarrow 16 + 1 = 17$ for Lini.

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d4 \Rightarrow 3$

DUNGEON MASTER

Seoni blasts it with magic missiles for 3 points of damage!

The battle rages for some time, until finally...

Dallens rolls: $1d20+5-2 \Rightarrow 5 + 5 - 2 = 8$ with his rapier.

Dallens rolls: $1d20+5-2 \Rightarrow 16 + 5 - 2 = 19$ with his starknife.

DUNGEON MASTER

That's a hit.

Dallens rolls: $1d4+1 \Rightarrow 4 + 1 = 5$

DALLEN

Starknife to the gut!

DUNGEON MASTER

Brutal blow, but it's still standing! But it can't go, because it's *dazed* from Seoni's spell! Seoni swings her staff...

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20-1 \Rightarrow 9 - 1 = 8$

DUNGEON MASTER

but in the crowded space, she hits the wall, killing her swing's momentum! Meanwhile, Lini whips her sling into a frenzy...

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 12 + 2 = 14$ **Dungeon Master rolls:** $1d3-2 \Rightarrow 3 - 2 = 1$

DUNGEON MASTER

A sling bullet from Lini catches it in the temple! It collapses in a boneless heap.

KEYGAN GHELVE

You... you killed it!

SEONI

No, it lives. It—

DALLEN

Stab the strange creature one more time. Then search it.

DUNGEON MASTER

Coup de grace? It perishes with barely a sound.

DALLEN

I am tempted to cut its ear off.

SEONI

Sigh.

THE SKULK

Cutting the skulk's ear off was an inside joke. One of the very first adventures I ever ran as a kid, circa 1990, was THE GAUNTLET, where Justin killed a skulk in the beginning of the adventure and kept its ear.

THE GAUNTLET winds up in this adventure path later, so stay tuned!

DUNGEON MASTER

The skulk has a dark cloak, rapier, light crossbow, 2 thunderstones, and 19 bolts.

DALLEN

Yoink! (Looking up from his grim duty) Sorry bout the hand, Keygan (fill my backpack).

KEYGAN GHELVE

It's... uh, it's okay... (rubs his hand tenderly).

DALLEN

I've a bad habit of threatening people (look sideways at Seoni).

SEONI

Sigh.

DALLEN

Is there anyone else we might have to worry about?

KEYGAN GHELVE

There... there are many more of them. They come from Jzadirun...

DALLEN

Is that some type of breeding ground for these ugly things? (Kick it.)

KEYGAN GHELVE

It's an ancient gnome enclave, beneath Cauldron. The people of Jzadirun were magicians, mostly... but they accidentally created the Vanishing... Since then it has been abandoned. Well, I thought it was.

DALLEN

The Vanishing?

KEYGAN GHELVE

A magical disease, contracted from using tainted magic items. It causes you to slowly disappear, until you no longer exist at all. My grandparents fled and survived. They built this shop over the entrance. We Ghelves have been keymakers ever since.

DALLEN

And you are what? The gatekeeper?

KEYGAN GHELVE

No, I'm the keymaster.

DALLEN

How many of them have come through?

KEYGAN GHELVE

Many. There are two kinds—more like that one there (points at the corpse), and shorter, more sinister ones who wear dark cloaks.

DALLEN

Great. Now what's going to happen to you?

KEYGAN GHELVE

I was about to ask you...?

DALLEN

Well, how often do they come through and check on you? You should be safe 'til then.

KEYGAN GHELVE

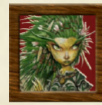
Nightly. But I cannot flee—they have my familiar!

**SEONIE**

You're a sorcerer?

KEYGAN GHELVE

Wizard, actually. And not a good one. They took Starbrow, my rat familiar. They threatened to kill him if I didn't do what they said!

**LINI**

That's horrible...! Who would dare hurt a defenseless animal...?

DALLEN

And is this where they bring the children?

KEYGAN GHELVE

Yes, and the others they have kidnapped.

DALLEN

What are they doing with them? Show me the entrance.

KEYGAN GHELVE

I don't know... Here... Here it is...

**DUNGEON MASTER**

It's under the stairs... a secret door...

DALLEN

(OOC) Open the door...

DUNGEON MASTER

It opens into darkness. A stale breeze whispers up from an untold depth. What little light spills through reveals the top of a stone staircase leading down...

DALLEN

Is this where they come from to check on you?

KEYGAN GHELVE

Yes...

DALLEN

How are those street thugs involved? The last laugh?

KEYGAN GHELVE

I don't know... I haven't met with them... I didn't know they were involved... (He doesn't seem happy with the thought.)

DALLEN

Well, they ruffed up a priest asking questions.

SEONI

Well, shall we go down there?

DALLEN

How do we know Keygan-helps-the-skulks here isn't going to lock us in?

SEONI

(Shrugs.) We can always tie him up.

KEYGAN GHELVE

Please, I am no friend to these... these creatures!

DALLEN

(To Seoni.) I'm rubbing off on ya, sweetheart!

SEONI

Sigh.

LINI

I believe him...

DALLEN

(To Lini) Is it some secret gnome thing?

LINI

.....

DALLEN

(To Keygan) I won't let the crazy lady tie ya up, mate!

KEYGAN GHELVE

But please, if you go, please save my familiar. Starbrow...

DALLEN

Lock your doors, keep an out for thugs, and get the guard if anything other than us comes back out.

KEYGAN GHELVE

Okay...

DALLEN

Jeez, Seoni, and I thought you played nice.

SEONIE

Sigh. The time for nice is over.

DALLEN

(OOC) Head into the secret door.

DUNGEON MASTER

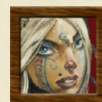
Well, we should probably stop here for the night then.
Until next time!

Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick connected.

DUNGEON MASTER

"A stone staircase, its steps shrouded with cobwebs and dust, descends twenty feet to a ten-foot-square landing then bends to the right and plunges into darkness..."



SEONI

This place looks pleasant.

LINI

I don't like the smell of this place... And neither does Ismadi

LINI'S HAWK

I didn't have a token for Lini's animal companion in the first session—her hawk, Ismadi—but it finally made an appearance this session.

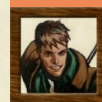
DUNGEON MASTER

You can also hear something...

DALLEN

(Sneak closer.)

Dallen rolls: 1d20+4 => 15 + 4 = 19



DALLEN

You ladies stay here.

SEONI

Sigh.

DALLEN

(OOC) Peek around the corner.

DUNGEON MASTER

It open
an unt
the top

DALL

Is this

KEYG

Yes...

SEONI

(In a whisper.) What is it?

DALLEN

Lini, bring the light.

VIRTUAL TABLETOP MAPS

For those with no experience playing with VTTs, there are a huge amount of benefits for DMs. I particularly like being able to set up maps in advance. This includes placing monsters, traps, treasure, and also light settings. This particular dungeon has very little light, so if the players (in this case, Justin) did not have a torch, his screen would be black. What the players can actually see on their screens is what their players can also see.

DUNGEON MASTER

She tosses the torch to you.

DALLEN

(OOC) Catch it.

SEONI

Do you see anything?

DALLEN

((Sneak to the end of this hallway, leaving the light at the corner.)) Not yet.... ((Motion them forward.))



DUNGEON MASTER

Now that you are closer, you can hear the sounds of birds chirping, of leaves rustling, and cheery giggles Most of the room is still shrouded by shadow, however.

DALLEN

((Are Lini and Seoni coming down the hall?))

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes, right behind you.

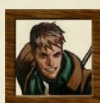
Moves tokens.

DALLEN

The light's coming from that gear-shaped door.

DUNGEON MASTER

A slight draft emanates from somewhere across from you...



DALLEN

((Take the light and move forward.))

DUNGEON MASTER

Across all four walls hang tarnished copper masks, which giggle softly...

DALLEN

((The masks?))

DUNGEON MASTER

They are shaped into the likeness of gnomes' faces...

DALLEN

((Hold my hand up to motion for the ladies to stay and walk up to the nearest one.))

DUNGEON MASTER

Its eyes flash open, and it says...

DALLEN

Sink me ship!

DUNGEON MASTER

Welcome to Jzadirune—behold the wonder! But beware, ye who seek to plunder. Traps abound and guardians peer, beyond every portal, behind every gear!

Then its eyes fall shut again, and it resumes its unnerving giggling

DALLEN

((Cast my gaze toward the gear door... look inside...))

DUNGEON MASTER

Do you open it the rest of the way?

DALLEN

{{purple,#book,text-align:left;background:#aa88aa55
((Yes, and motion Lini and Seoni to stay.))

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll your Perception.

Dallen rolls: « $1d20-1 = 19 - 1 = 18$ »

Dallen spies a skulk in the shadows!



DUNGEON MASTER

(OOC) Roll initiative!

Dallen rolls: « $1d20+4 = 5 + 4 = 9$ »



Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 12 + 2 = 14$

DUNGEON MASTER

The skulk rushes forward, a gleaming rapier in its hand!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+3 \Rightarrow 6 + 3 = 9$

DUNGEON MASTER

You step easily to the side, dodging!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+3 \Rightarrow 17 + 3 = 20$

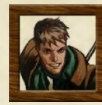
DUNGEON MASTER

But you didn't see its friend—or its rapier!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d6 \Rightarrow 5$

DUNGEON MASTER

It bites into your shoulder for 5 damage!



DALLEN

Filthy creatures! Savages.

DUNGEON MASTER

Your turn.

DALLEN

((5-foot step back out of the room, drop the light, and pull out my starknife in my free hand as part of my move action.))

DUNGEON MASTER

Nice.

Dallen stabs with his rapier: « $1d20+5 = 18 + 5 = 23$ »
dealing « $1d6+1 = 5 + 1 = 6$ ».

DUNGEON MASTER

Is that a possible crit?

DALLEN

Yes.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll to confirm.

Dallen rolls: $1d20+5 \Rightarrow 10 + 5 = 15$.

DUNGEON MASTER

That's a crit!

Dallen rolls: $1d6+1 \Rightarrow 5 + 1 = 6$

DUNGEON MASTER

You leap backward, thrusting it in the throat!

DALLEN

Take that, freak!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 14 + 2 = 16$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d4 \Rightarrow 1$

DUNGEON MASTER

With a screech, Ismadi flies past your shoulder and begins clawing at the fiend!

The battle continues, until finally Ismadi, Lini's hawk, unleashes a full attack against the creature...



Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 6 + 2 = 8$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 12 + 2 = 14$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 20 + 2 = 22$

DUNGEON MASTER

Confirming...

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 17 + 2 = 19$
Dungeon Master rolls: $3d4 \Rightarrow 8$

DUNGEON MASTER

The hawk's claws tear out the skulk's eyes!!!



LINI

Good Ismadi... good bird...

DUNGEON MASTER

Cots line the walls of this room. They look soiled and moldy, but also recently used.

DALLEN

((Search them using my rapier to keep the filth off of me.))

Dallen rolls: Perception « $1d20-1 = 6 - 1 = 5$ »

DUNGEON MASTER

You don't find anything. But it stinks in here.

It doesn't take long before Dallen has his first encounter with one of the gear doors of Jzardune...

DALLEN

((Examine it.))

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll Perception.

Dallen rolls: « $1d20-1 = 6 - 1 = 5$ »

DUNGEON MASTER

You don't see anything unusual.

DALLEN

((Push the gear-shaped door open.))

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll your Reflex saving throw!

Dallen rolls: $1d20+6 \Rightarrow 19 + 6 = 25$

DALLEN

Blam!



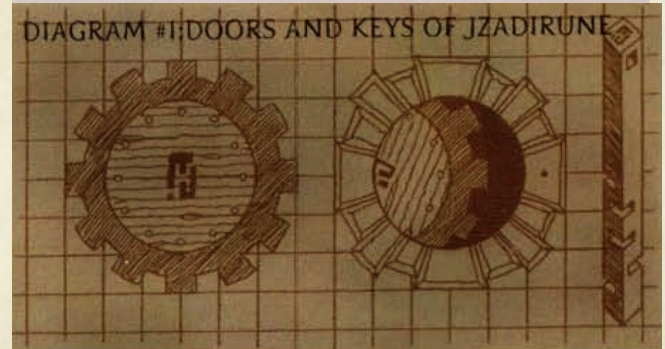
DUNGEON MASTER

A cloud of gas sprays out of the wall with a snapping hiss!!!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d6 \Rightarrow 5$

DUNGEON MASTER

You take 5 points of acid damage!



After cleaning himself off of the deadly substance, Dallen moves back out into the main room, only to see two half-elves who were not there before...

DALLEN

wtf?



FARIO

I am Fario.

DALLEN

'ello, Fario. Come down here a lot?

FARIO

I have been following you, Dallen.



FELLIAN

As have I. We both have been watching you for some time.

DALLEN

Look mate, I ain't a pirate anymore. Those days are behind me.

DALLEN

That's not what this is about. We knew you were investigating the kidnappings. We have been as well.

DALLEN

Sounds like you've been investigating *me*.

FELLIAN

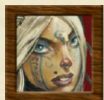
I assure you that is not the case. After you and your companions defeated those Last Laugh thugs, we decided to offer to team up with you.

FARIO

When you did not return from Keygan's, we entered. The gnome told us everything.

DALLEN

Loose lips... ((Turn to Seoni and Lini.)) Ladies, meet Fario.



SEONI

How do we know you can be trusted?

FELLIAN

Do we look like skulks?

DALLEN

Neither did them Last Laugh thugs.

FARIO

We have no way to assure you of our intentions. But the more of us down here, the better.

DALLEN

Can't argue wit' that.

FELLIAN

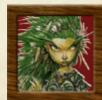
Honestly, we are here asking for your help. We are only two. So what say you, Dallen?

DALLEN

Well, I didn't catch your name, mate.

FELLIAN

I am Fellian.



LINI

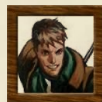
They seem nice... (While petting her bird absentmindedly.)

DALLEN

Until you can be trusted, you can stay in the front.

FARIO

Agreed. Which direction were you headed?



DALLEN

Down the hall there.

DUNGEON MASTER

Fario pulls out a *sunrod*.

DALLEN

((To Seoni.)) Keep an eye on 'em, sweetheart.

SEONI

Sigh.

DALLEN

Can't you half points see in the dark?

FARIO

Not in complete darkness, human.

DALLEN

Don't be jealous 'cause me mum didn't lay wit' elves.

The group continued on their search, suffering more damage from Jzaridune's doors than creatures, though it isn't long before they are ambushed by another skulk after their group gets divided thanks to a tilting-floor trap in the hall...

Dallen stabs with his rapier: « 1d20+5 = 8 + 5 = 13 »
dealing « 1d6+1 = 5 + 1 = 6 ».

DUNGEON MASTER

You stab it in the gut! It folds, crumpled on the cold stone floor.

DUNGEON MASTER

There's a hooded lantern in the center of this room sending your shadows stretching up the walls and to the ceiling. There is also a chest.

FARIO

We are not interested in treasure.

DALLEN

Well, I have bills to pay, mate.

FARIO

That is fine, take what you will. Our mission is to get to the bottom of these kidnappings.

They continue on, with Dallen attempting to get to the bottom of the mystery of all the newly carved tunnels through the dungeon...

DALLEN

What in Cayden's name is diggin' all these holes?

FARIO

I don't know, but whatever it is, I hope it's gone...



DALLEN

Let's take the tunnel; we might be able to bypass these damnable doors.

FARIO

Hm. I'm willing to try that.

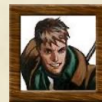
Dallen's hunch proved to be right, and they managed to avoid opening anymore doors. They continued on, encountering many more mysteries and dangers, including a choker that got the drop on Dallen, rendering him unconscious for a time...

*Until finally, when sneaking through what seemed to be the old kitchen and dining halls of Jzaridune, they were ambushed by **dark stalkers** as they crossed through a tunnel. The foul creatures, flanking the opening, stabbed at Lini as she passed through.*



Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 14 + 2 = 16$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 20 + 4 = 24$



DALLEN

Ouch.



Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 8 + 4 = 12$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d3+3+2d6 \Rightarrow 3 + 3 + 7 = 13$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d3+3+2d6 \Rightarrow 3 + 3 + 7 = 13$

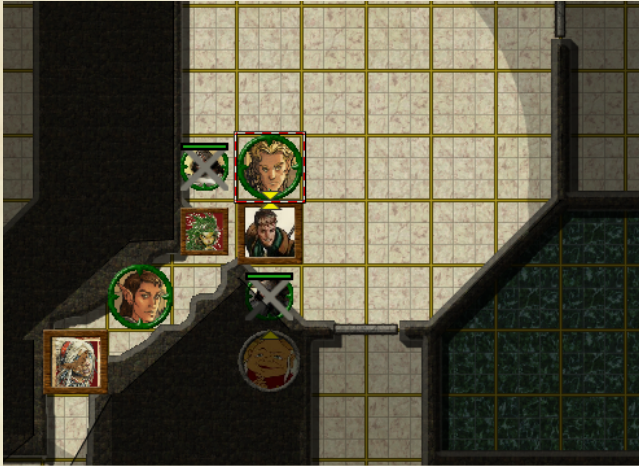
DUNGEON MASTER

Their cruel blades stab into the side of her neck and under her armpit! She drops, bleeding badly...



The dark stalkers don't last long after that, but then Lini rolls to stabilize, having but one chance...

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20-15 => 9 - 15 = -6



DUNGEON MASTER

Lini coughs, dark blood spraying from between her lips. With a sickening gurgle that quickly turns into a choke, Lini spasms, her eyes rolling back into her head. Then she is still. She was at -15, and her Con is 16... she had only the 1 shot...



SEONI

NO!!!! Lini!!!!

DALLEN

((Silence... stares down at Lini...))

DUNGEON MASTER

Fario takes off his fine elven cloak and wraps her body.

DALLEN

Sneaky bastards! What were they?



FARIO

Dark stalkers. Creatures from the Underdark.

DALLEN

Why are they working with the skulks? What do they want with children?

FARIO

I know not... It is disturbing. There is something fouler at work here than mere skulks. They would not band together with these creatures if something more powerful were not pulling the strings...

DUNGEON MASTER

Fellian flashes Fario a look, but says nothing... Ismadi flies down and lands next to Lini...

DALLEN

We can't just leave her in the dungeon.

FARIO

What do you suggest?

DALLEN

Perhaps the clerics can help her? I know not of such matters.



FELLIAN

Perhaps. But if so, they will require payment.

SEONI

We might be able to sell this loot and take out a loan.

DALLEN

We could take her to the church... they could cast gentle repose on her until we could afford to raise her... Perhaps the clerics would hear our pleas and join us in our quest.

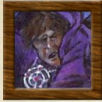
DUNGEON MASTER

Do you wish to go back to Cauldron now?

DALLEN

Yes.





RUPHOS

Welcome back... oh, dear...

DALLEN

She was hurt beneath the city. We've had a breakthrough in the search for the missing people.

RUPHOS

It seems she is more than hurt... This child is dead.

JENYA

Breakthrough? What have you learned?



DALLEN

A key was made for the skulks sneaking children into Jzaridun. Keygan was forced to help.

JENYA

A key? Jzaridun? Keygan the locksmith? Of course... It's all making sense now... I used our church's artifact to commune with my deity. I was given the following cryptic clue: *"The locks are key to finding them. Look beyond the curtain, below the cauldron. Beware the doors with teeth. Descend into the malachite hold, where precious life is bought with gold... Half a dwarf binds them, but not for long."* That is all.

DALLEN

Life for gold... slaves?

JENYA

I don't know what it means... the messages from the gods rarely make sense to mortals.

DALLEN

Can you preserve our friend's body until we can afford to raise her?

JENYA

Are you returning to Jzaridune?

DALLEN

Yes. We must find the missing people.

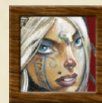
JENYA

Very well. We will do this for you.

The party then returned to the bowels of the ancient gnome settlement...

DALLEN

Sorry, Seoni. She just didn't see them...



SEONI

DALLEN

Eh. I've been known to be somewhat bad luck....

SEONI

I'm sure you are not cursed.

DALLEN

((Pulls down his sleeve revealing property of Besmera.))
The bitch queen has her mark on me.

SEONI

Nothing a knife won't get rid of.

DALLEN

((Stares blankly.))

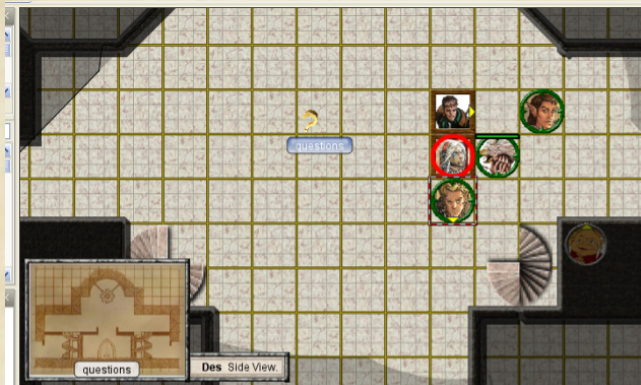


DUNGEON MASTER

You enter an enormous chamber whose ceiling vanishes high above you into shadow. There are spiral staircases that lead up to balconies. Suddenly, an unspeakable creature floats down out of the shadows!!!
Roll for initiative!

DALLEN

((Stares blankly.))



The battle ensues, and the grell quickly paralyzes Seoni...

DUNGEON MASTER

The grell, injured by Fario, turns its full attack on him!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 17 + 4 = 21$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 16 + 4 = 20$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 11 + 4 = 15$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 16 + 4 = 20$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 7 + 4 = 11$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 8 + 4 = 12$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 11 + 4 = 15$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 12 + 4 = 16$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 2 + 4 = 6$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+4 \Rightarrow 3 + 4 = 7$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20-1 \Rightarrow 19 - 1 = 18$

DUNGEON MASTER

6 tentacles hit and its bite hits.

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d4+1 \Rightarrow 1 + 1 = 2$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d4+1 \Rightarrow 2 + 1 = 3$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d4+1 \Rightarrow 4 + 1 = 5$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d4+1 \Rightarrow 4 + 1 = 5$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d4+1 \Rightarrow 4 + 1 = 5$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d4+1 \Rightarrow 4 + 1 = 5$
Dungeon Master rolls: $1d4 \Rightarrow 4$



DALLEN

Ouch. Stupid tentacles.

DUNGEON MASTER

29 points of damage! Let me check his Con score... The wicked barbed tentacles tear into Fario, pulling away long strips of his flesh. Its vicious beak clamps down onto the left side of his face, biting down through his cheekbone, which crumbles like powder. The whole left side of his face seems to sag, and his eyeball spills from its socket, dangling... I believe it's your turn.



GRELL

Dallen rolls: $1d4+1 \Rightarrow 1 + 1 = 2$

DALLEN

#\$@!#@!



FELLIAN

Fario!!!

The fight continues... The grell scooped up Fario's body and retreated to the balcony from whence it came... Dallen and Fello gave chase... Fello was soon hit by the tentacles...

DUNGEON MASTER

Now Fello has to make his saves...

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+3 \Rightarrow 4 + 3 = 7$

DUNGEON MASTER

Failed. Fellian is paralyzed! Your turn!

First Dallen stabs with his Rapier* « $1d20+5-2 = 20 + 5 - 2 = 23$ » and comes across with his starknife « $1d20+5-2 = 5 + 5 - 2 = 8$ ».

DUNGEON MASTER

Nat 20! Roll to confirm!

Dallen rolls: $1d20+5-2 \Rightarrow 14 + 5 - 2 = 17$

DUNGEON MASTER

Hit!

Dallen rolls: $3d6+2 \Rightarrow 10 + 2 = 12$

DUNGEON MASTER

You stab it right above its vicious beak, driving your rapier all the way to the hilt! It drops, a quivering mass, its tentacles flapping madly like fish tossed on the shore, gore spurting out its wound, covering your arm up to your elbow!

DALLEN

((Kick it off of Fario. Rush back down to Seoni.)) Are you all right, Seoni?

SEONI

I... I think so...

DALLEN

((Examine Fario.))

DUNGEON MASTER

Fario is quite dead. Half his face is bitten off. But maybe the church will gently repose him, too. If you're so inclined. Fellian drops down on his knees next to his fallen comrade.

DALLEN

((Rest my hand on his shoulder. Not the gory one.))

DUNGEON MASTER

Do you want to take Fario back, too?

DALLEN

Yes, that would be the right thing to do.



DUNGEON MASTER

All right, we'll leave off here then. *Until next time!*

Amount of dungeon uncovered so far:



Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

The heroes returned to Cauldron, leaving Fario's body in the gentle care of Jenya and the church of Iomedae. They then returned, only three strong, to the depths of skulk-haunted Jzaridune.

They faced more dangers, found more keys to the strange gear doors, and even poor Fellian became possessed for a short time by a raggomuffyn that leapt from a skulk it had ensnared...



SKULK-ENSNARED RAGGOMUFFYN

R.A.W.

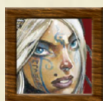
Up until about Chapter 8 of this campaign, I ran each adventure strictly rules-as-written. Every room, encounter, NPC, trap, piece of treasure—only slightly adjusting or adding for continuity or to account for players' actions. Honestly, it was the first time I had ever done so in the entire history of my DM'ing experience. But once we got into the final quarter of this campaign, the modules became too dungeon-grindy, and I elected to dismiss most of the encounters.



Finally our heroes entered a room containing Keygan's rat familiar, Starbrow. A chest sat next to it...

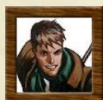
STARBROW

Squeak!



SEONI

That must be Starbrow!



DALLEN

Examine the rat.

DUNGEON MASTER

It seems excited to see you. It clearly wants out of its cage.

DALLEN

Hey lil guy.

STARBROW

Squeak!

DALLEN

You trapped?

STARBROW

Squeak!

DALLEN

((Opening cage.)) That's no way to treat anybody!

DUNGEON MASTER

It excitedly hops out.

DALLEN

You should probably go with the white-haired lady, lil guy.

DUNGEON MASTER

She takes it.

DALLEN

She's used to keeping company with rats, like me. ((wink))

SEONI

Sigh.

DALLEN

((Examine the chest.))

MIMIC

Hello.

DALLEN

What the...?!



MIMIC

I'm guarding the creature. But I bore of it.

DALLEN

Oh...

MIMIC

I am willing to make a deal.

DALLEN

Let's make a deal, mate.

MIMIC

Feed me something tasty.

DALLEN

You like skulk?

The two negotiate a proper meal.



DUNGEON MASTER

Roll Diplomacy.

Dallen rolls: « 1d20+4 = 15 + 4 = 19 »

MIMIC

These will do nicely! *gnom gnom gnom*

DALLEN

LOL

SEONI

(whisper) Disgusting...

DALLEN

Eh.... I knew this one mate... made this thing look like a ladies' tea party... Should've seen 'em... he had two teeth in the front.

SEONI

Charming.

DALLEN

Eh, he 'ad a way wit the ladies... Gold was that way, I believe.



FELLIAN

Heh. Yes, I've known fellows like that.

SEONI

Sigh.

The trio continue to explore, eventually coming upon some sort of elevator...



DUNGEON MASTER

"The floor of this octagonal room is actually a large wooden platform supported by taut iron chains looped over eight enormous pulleys bolted to the fifteen-foot-high ceiling. One end of each chain is fastened to a corner of the platform, while the other end drops through a hole in the platform, connected to something far below. Set into the northeast wall is an iron panel with an iron lever jutting from it."



HOBGOBLIN 1

Who you?

DALLEN

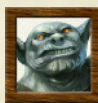
I'm with the Last Laugh—who are you?

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll Bluff.

Dallen rolls: 1d20+5 => 6 + 5 = 11

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20 => 8



HOBGOBLIN 1

Oh. You want to go to auction?

DALLEN

Why else would a lubber like me be 'ere?



HOBGOBLIN 2

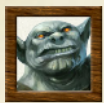
Kazmojen said no one goes down to malachite fortress now.

DALLEN

Ah, fair enough. Perhaps I could sway yer minds a bit... Hey Seoni, whaddya think you could do for these mates?

SEONI

Anything they want... (approaches seductively).



HOBGOBLIN 1

Hehe, I like pretty lady.

DALLEN

Step right up, gents.

HOBGOBLIN 2

(Sees Fellian as the half-elf steps inside.) Why is there elf here?!

DALLEN

He ain't no elf; he's a half-breed bastard.

FELLIAN

Fellian throws you a sidelong glance and a grimace.

HOBGOBLIN 2

Still too elfy for me! I take his head!



FELLIAN

Try it.

DALLEN

Gonna cost ya, mate. Don't let me stand in yer way.

HOBGOBLIN 2

If you want into the Malachite Hold, you give us elf! (Pulls out his sword.) Graah!!! (Throws himself at Fellian.)

DALLEN

((Attack.))

The three quickly mop up the two hobgoblins. They decide then that before they lower themselves into this mysterious "Malachite Fortress," they should return to Cauldron to supplement their party. They bring along 2 new adventurers—Valeros and Kyra. When they return, they waste no time, heading down deeper into the earth...

FIREPOWER

To make up for the loss of Lini and Fario, I brought on two more Pathfinder iconics as NPCs—the above-mentioned Valeros (fighter) and Kyra (cleric).



DUNGEON MASTER

"The walls turn from bare gray to polished green malachite as the elevator creaks and groans. After a minute-long descent down the dark shaft, the wooden floor shudders as it comes to a rest, and the chains stop rattling. Above, the shaft rises into darkness. The only exit from this room appears to be the iron-reinforced wooden door set into the south wall."



The group is immediately confronted by a stone spike! It doesn't take long for Dallen to realize how impetuous and eager for battle Valeros is... which tends to disrupt group tactics. The battle draws the attention of an ogre nearby, and soon after, others...



Seoni & Valeros



VALEROS

Ugh, by the gods!

DALLEN

What? Is it another ogre?

VALEROS

No, it's a... fleshy turd! And it smells bad, too!

They manage to defeat the lemure and the rest of the wave of monsters, though just barely. Rather than waiting to rest, Valeros urges Dallen on to explore...

VALEROS

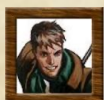
So what's in the ogre's room? (Points to the door.)

DALLEN

Good question. Let's find out.

DUNGEON MASTER

A locked chest sits on the floor, along with soiled furs.



DALLEN

Ogres relieve themselves in their beds? Gross.

DUNGEON MASTER

It certainly looks that way to you.

DALLEN

Surprised they walk on two legs.

VALEROS

Well, that one doesn't anymore. Hah!

DALLEN

True. ((Check the chest; use the key I got off the ogre.))

DUNGEON MASTER

It unlocks with a *snap*. You find... 5,990 copper, 2,248 silver... a *potion of cure moderate wounds*... and two gems worth 100gp each.

DALLEN

What was he, some sort of door man? Maybe we could have just paid the entrance fee.

VALEROS

Where's the fun in that?

DALLEN

Yeah. ((Search the room.))

Dallen rolls: « 1d20+1 = 17 + 1 = 18 »

VALEROS

(Surprised.) What the hell...?

DALLEN

((Wonders how many of these he's missed.))

DUNGEON MASTER

A lot.

DALLEN

((To Valeros)) Get the others.

VALEROS

(Yelling) Get in here!!!

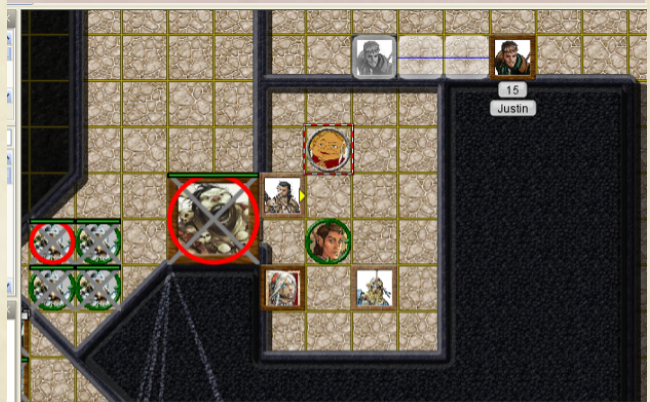


KYRA

Yell, why don't ya.

DALLEN

((Sneak around the corner...))

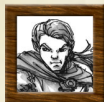


The heroes continue to search the Malachite Fortress for the kidnapped townfolk. Valeros recognizes the fortress, explaining that it was created by a dwarven hero, **Zenith Splintershield**, who waged war against the Underdark. Then, 10 years ago, he marched on a crusade with his followers into the Underdark and was never seen again.

Eventually, the heroes come upon three of the missing townfolk—two halflings and a dwarf—being used as slaves to help construct weapons in a forge. They take out the goblin and hobgoblin guards, until only one hobgoblin remains. The cur grabs one of the halflings as a hostage, pressing his wicked blade against her throat...

HOBGOBLIN

Don't move, or the halfling dies!



JENEER EVERDAWN

Help!!!

HOBGOBLIN

Shut up!

VALEROS

Why you filthy... (takes a half-step forward)

HOBGOBLIN

Stay back!

SEONI

(Whisper) I think I can take him out without hurting her!

DALLEN

Do it. I will stall.

DUNGEON MASTER

Seoni casts *magic missiles*!

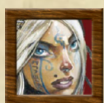
Dungeon Master rolls: $2d4+2 \Rightarrow 7 + 2 = 9$

DUNGEON MASTER

The missiles strike it right in the face, disintegrating it in a cloud of red mist!

DALLEN

((Hugs her and spins her around.))



SEONI

Ahem.

JENEER EVERDAWN

Thank you!

VALEROS

Who the hell are you?

FELLIAN

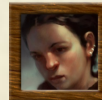
These are missing townfolk.

KYRA

Are you okay?

DUNGEON MASTER

They nod in response to Kyra.



MAPLE

There are more of us here.

DALLEN

What in Hades are you doing down here?

SONDOR IRONFOLD

They haven't sold us yet, like many of the others.

DALLEN

Sold?



SONDOR IRONFOLD

They were putting us to work here in their forges, creating weapons for their army

DALLEN

What army? What in Besmera's Bosom is going on down here?

MAPLE

Not their army. The dumb dwarf is mistaken. They are selling these weapons to an army. Some fire giant in the south. I heard 'em talking.

JENEER EVERDAWN

Yeah, that's right. I heard that, too. Some fire giant by the name of Skaithen.

SONDOR IRONFOLD

Well, whatever. For some army. Thank the gods you rescued us! Were you sent by the Lord Mayor?

DALLEN

Well, we ain't out of the forge yet.

VALEROS

No one sent me, babe.

FELLIAN

Where are the others?

JENEER EVERDAWN

Probably at the auction.

MAPLE

Many have been sold already, no doubt.



KYRA

Those curs!

DALLEN

The children?

JENEER EVERDAWN

Some children remain, I think.

DALLEN

Where the Hades are the children? What do they want with children...

SONDOR IRONFOLD

I don't know... The poor children...

VALEROS

Probably a stew. Heh.

SEONI

((Flashes Valeros a look.))



DALLEN

((To Valeros.)) What is wrong with you?

VALEROS

What? ((Innocently.))

DALLEN

I've met pirates not as foul as ye.

VALEROS

Oh, like I would have had some of the stew. Geez.

KYRA

We must save the children.

FELLIAN

I agree with the cleric.

DALLEN

Let's go, then...

SONDOR IRONFOLD

What about us? You can't just leave us here!

DALLEN

Right, right. We should get them back to Keygan.

FELLIAN

The children may be sold by the time we return.

DALLEN

There's a secret room we discovered. We can hide you in there. Barricade yourselves in.

SEONI

Yes, let's put them in the armory.

DALLEN

There's weapons.

JENEER EVERDAWN

Fine by me!

SONDOR IRONFOLD

But... But I don't know how...

MAPLE

Relax, honey. I do.

DALLEN

Yeah, this young scrapper can take care of you. ((Slap her on the shoulder.))

After getting the women to the secret armory room they had discovered earlier, the group hurries onward. Searching another room, Dallen is intrigued by the fire beetles he sees in all of the cages...

DUNGEON MASTER

It appears to be a bedroom. A beetle sits in a cage, shedding soft light.

DALLEN

((Bring the beetle out.)) Look what I found!

SEONI

Ew.

VALEROS

I wonder if it tastes good.



FELLIAN

Yes. Feed it to your boorish friend, Dallen.

DALLEN

((Looks sideways at Valeros.)) I think it's used as light.

KYRA

It does seem so.

KYRA

Clever for goblins.

DALLEN

Yeah... for goblins. ((Set it down outside the door.))

Dallen resumes walking down the hall.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll your Reflex Save.

Dallen rolls: 1d20+7 => 18 + 7 = 25

DUNGEON MASTER

You hop back as the floor opens beneath your feet to a pit filled with spikes! It then SLAMS back closed.

DALLEN

There's a pit trap over here.

VALEROS

((Claps you on the shoulder.)) That'll put hair on your chest!

DALLEN

Yeah, and holes in it, too.

KYRA

Wicked creatures. I told you they were clever... too clever.

FELLIAN

Let me see if I can disarm it.

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+9 => 11 + 9 = 20

DALLEN

((Clenches his starknife as he peers down the hall.))

FELLIAN

I did it. It is safe.

VALEROS

Good work, bowman!

DALLEN

Fellian. That's his name. But Halfpoint works too! ((laughs))

VALEROS

Haha!

FELLIAN

How amusing.

DALLEN

((Leans over to Fellian.)) Careful mate, boorish is contagious!

FELLIAN

I think it's a human trait.

DALLEN

Yer 'alf way there, mate!

It doesn't take long before they find the auction. The half-troll Kazmojen and his allies make short work of the group. Dallen and Fellian alone escape the first attempt, with Kyra, Valeros, and Seoni knocked unconscious. They escape just long enough to take some healing potions. When they return, they find that their three companions are chained up with the children. It doesn't take long before Fellian is dropped unconscious as well, leaving only Dallen in a heroic last stand...



ORBIUS

ENOUGH!

DUNGEON MASTER

A beholder appears.

KAZMOJEN

What the...?

DALLEN

What?



PYLLRAK SHYRAAT

Who are you?!

ORBIUS

You will give me the boy, Terrem.

KAZMOJEN

Why would I do that?

DALLEN

((Crouches behind the pillar.))



Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+7 => 6 + 7 = 13

DUNGEON MASTER

A beam of energy shoots out of one of its eyes... The howler disintegrates.



KAZMOJEN

PRICKLES!!!

DALLEN

((Smiles.))

ORBIUS

Give me the boy.

KAZMOJEN

Take him! ((Flees.))

DALLEN

Hey, big guy... I ain't one to stop a fella like you... just curious, is all...

ORBIUS

Indeed.

DALLEN

What do you need with the kid? ((Drops the crossbow.))

ORBIUS

This boy should not have been taken from Cauldron. I intend to see him safely returned to the orphanage.

DALLEN

((Begins removing the boy's shackles.)) Ya safe now, lubber.

ORBIUS

You prevented that half-troll from selling him. For that, you will be rewarded.

DUNGEON MASTER

A **Veiled Lady** suddenly appears next to him. She hands you a pouch containing 50 platinum pieces.

DALLEN

Thanks, lady...

DUNGEON MASTER

The lady tilts her head in acknowledgment and then vanishes.)

ORBIUS

Do what you will with the rest of these people. They are of no consequence to me. ((To the boy.)) Come, Terrem.

DUNGEON MASTER

They vanish.

((Stomps on Prickles's ashes.))

The group returns to Cauldron to heal. When they take the children to the orphanage, they discover that the mysterious Veiled Lady already dropped off Terrem, fast asleep. As to a beholder, Gretchyn knew of no such beast.

*After resting, they decide to return to the Malachite Fortress to finish off Kazmojen. When they arrive, they find that all of the loot in the place had already been sent off to Kazmojen's holdings in the Underdark. However, they find him and his remaining retinue, as well as two remaining kidnapped townsfolk. A battle ensues, in which Kazmojen is killed. His right hand, **Zarkad**, surrenders. Dallen locks the hobgoblin in one of the Malachite Fortress's dungeons, leaving him there to rot, before returning once again to Cauldron.*



Back in town, Fellian says his goodbyes. He takes the body of Fario, explaining that their patron will decide his ultimate fate. He tells Dallen he hopes to see him again one day, a feeling that is reciprocated by our pirate protagonist.

QUESTIONS & CLUES:

- Why was Kazmojen sending weapons and armor to a fire giant?
- Whatever happened to the hero Zenith Splintershield and his followers after they invaded the Underdark?
- Who was the Veiled Lady, and what did the beholder—Orbius—want with the boy Terrem?
- How are the Last Laugh thieves' guild involved, and how did they recently get so powerful as to drive out their rivals, the Alleybashers and the Hillfolk?
- The statue of the dwarven god warned the PCs to beware the "Shackleborn" and beware "the Thirteen." What does this portend...?



ZARKAD THE HOBGOBLIN

NOSTALGIA

One of the main reasons running a campaign using a virtual tabletop was because it reminded me of the old "Example of Play" section in the *AD&D 2nd Edition Player's Handbook*, combined with the movement diagrams in the 3rd Edition PhB. I found it—and still find it—very appealing being able to save the chatlogs and put these synopses together for posterity. They've proven to be pretty rewarding for my DM-brain, not to mention allowed this campaign to endure over a decade (more than a decade!), when otherwise everyone would have totally forgotten where we left off, and what had already transpired.

I spent more time recording examples of combat in this first chapter than I do for the remainder of this campaign. As the chapters go on, I sum up more and more events in blurbs for the sake of brevity, which makes this first chapter the longest synopsis in this entire campaign log, by far.

THE SHACKLED CITY

ADVENTURE PATH



JZADIRUNE





Malachite Fortress

←
To Underdark



1 square = 10 feet

WEST

THE SHACKLED CITY

ADVENTURE PATH



CHAPTER TWO: DRAKTHAR'S WAY



Having now enough money, Dallen pays for a raise dead and restoration spell for Lini, their deceased druid. Because the group can have only 3 iconic NPCs at a time, Dallen's player decides to bump Valeros, finding him too much of a liability. The group—now consisting of Dallen, Seoni, Lini, and Kyra—barely has enough time to rest before they are summoned to the city barracks to speak with the Captain of the Guard, Terseon Skellerang. They tell the human captain their story...



TERSEON SKELLERANG

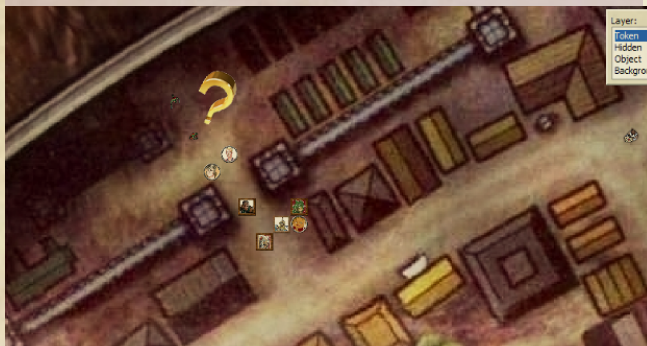
So you just took it upon yourselves to invade Keygan's shop, is that it?

DALLEN

Children were being taken, mate. Surely that can be forgiven?

TERSEON SKELLERANG

Hm. Indeed.



TERSEON SKELLERANG

We are understaffed. I've been trying to get the Lord Mayor to give us more troops, but until that happens, I suppose we must rely on adventurers such as yourself.

DALLEN

Sounds like we did you a favor... couldn't have done it without Fario and Fellian.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

Who?

DALLEN

A couple half-elves who followed me. I attract a bit of attention, mate.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

I see.



SGT. SKYLAR LEWIS

There was another matter we wished to speak to you about. For the past couple of nights, we've been experiencing a string of violent muggings and vandalism across town.

DALLEN

Well, you want us to look into these incidents? I think we may have stumbled across one of these muggings a few nights back...

TERSEON SKELLERANG

You refer to your run-in with the Last Laugh? No, these are goblins. We've killed nearly a dozen of the filthy creatures already, but they keep coming back, every night. We don't know how they are getting into the city.

DALLEN

There were goblins in the dungeons below town.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

Yes, well, if there is another entrance into the Underdark, we need to find it.

DALLEN

Keygan would have seen them if they were comin' from Jazaridune.

SGT. SKYLAR LEWIS

Most likely they are not, since you have been down there for the past couple of days, and this started a few days ago.

DALLEN

True sgt. Well, why don't we investigate a few of the places those lubbers have been spotted.

SGT. SKYLAR LEWIS

Be our guest (gives you names of locations).

TERSEON SKELLERANG

Best of luck to you, then. But I think this impresses upon you just how undermanned we are.

DALLEN

Well, I won't be callin' on you when things get hot. There's a mate named Valeros; maybe you could 'ire 'im.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

If we could afford it. I need to speak to the Lord Mayor about raising taxes so we can afford more troops. I'm sure we can count on your support.

DALLEN

Of course.

The heroes travel to the southern end of Cauldron, passing around the lake.



KYRA

Have you heard of the monster of this lake?

DALLEN

Nope, but with this town's love 'fair wit tragedy doesn't surprise me.

KYRA

It's a horrible monster, they say.

SEONI

It's a myth.

KYRA

The Crater Lake Monster.



LINI

Maybe it's just lonely...

DUNGEON MASTER

You arrive. You find graffiti on several buildings in the area.

DALLEN

What's it say?

DUNGEON MASTER

Some examples are... "Drakthar owns this"... "Hail Drakthar, Lord of the Rats"... "Drakthar is the fog!"... "Who builds town in volcano? Stupid humans."

DALLEN

I agree with the last one. Who does that?

DUNGEON MASTER

Do you want to learn the history of Cauldron? Roll Diplomacy.

Dallen rolls: « 1d20+6 = 3 + 6 = 9 »

DUNGEON MASTER

You don't seem to learn anything about Cauldron's history. Do you want to try again?

DALLEN

I am good and dumb. I think I will just agree with the goblins. Let's hit the store over here, maybe they've seen something.

DUNGEON MASTER

Zanathor of Zanathor's Provisions tells you that he has not seen anything, but ever since it started, he's begun closing up his doors and windows earlier, before nightfall. He is quite unsettled about it.

DALLEN

So it's usually at night.

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes. Every night, he says.

DALLEN

I want to go hide in those woods over there tonight.



SEONI

A sensible plan.

LINI

I like the woods...

DALLEN

(To Lini) It's good to have you back.



DUNGEON MASTER

What do you do until nightfall?

DALLEN

Investigate more about Cauldron.

DUNGEON MASTER

A block to the northwest stands **Bluecrater Academy** . 20gp per day gives you access to their library.

DALLEN

Sure.

DUNGEON MASTER

Seoni seems to like the idea of spending the day there, too. Okay, this is what you learn...

CAULDRON REGION HISTORY

- **-3,000 years:** **Spell Weavers** from an unknown plane arrive in the area and settle in the region destined to become the **Demonskar** . They subjugate local ogre tribes and use them to help in building a great city. At this time, the region to the east of Cauldron is ruled by the **yuan-ti** of **Shatterhorn** and the underground rivers and lakes are ruled by the **kopru**. Frost giants rule the mountaintops.
- **-2,500 years:** Drawn by rumors of powerful magic in the region, the human necromancer (and worshiper of **Vecna**) named **Kyuss** arrives in the region. He establishes a base of command and erects a massive tower, known now as the **Spire of Long Shadows** . His cultists begin skirmishing with the **yuan-ti** to the south.
- **-2,000 years:** Mysterious doom arrives at the **Spire of Long Shadows** . **Kyuss** and his minions vanish.
- **-1,900 years:** Last of the **kopru** are driven off by **spell weaver** explorers.

- **-1,820 years:** When the **spell weavers** make a critical error in the construction of a massive planar transport device, their city is destroyed in a tremendous explosion that tears a hole in reality. Portals to the Abyss open randomly in the region for the next century, allowing demons to gather and grow strong in the ruins. The massive crater later becomes known as the **Demonskar** .
- **-710 years:** One of the greatest wizards of the time, **Surabar Spellmason** , receives a vision from **Nidrama** , who has grown concerned about the demon infestation in the region. She gifts Surabar with a potent magic weapon named **Alakast** , and charges him with the task of settling the region and driving out the demonic taint in the **Demonskar** .
- **-700 years:** **Surabar Spellmason** leads a small army inland from the newly founded city of **Sasserine** , on the pretense of founding a new city of his own. He founds **Redgorge** in the shadows of a great volcano, and raises the Basalt Bastions to protect his men from attack while they begin building.
- **-690 years:** **Surabar** defeats the demon **Nabthatoron** in combat and breaks the back of the demon host from the **Demonskar** . While the place remains dangerous to this day, the demons never fully recover from this sound defeat, and have remained in the crater.
- **-680 years:** Discovery of numerous profitable mines in the region attracts hundreds of prospectors and adventurers. **Redgorge** quickly outgrows its walls. **Surabar** determines that the nearby volcano is extinct, and that its cauldron would make an excellent natural defense against attack from **Nabthatoron's** armies. Many of **Redgorge's** inhabitants relocate to this region – **Cauldron** is founded. Over the centuries, the discovery of many large underground complexes and caverns below the city draws the attention of dwarves and gnomes from far and wide. Two of these regions become **Jzadirune** and the **Malachite Fortress** .
- **-650 years:** **Surabar** dies of natural causes. He is entombed in an undisclosed location. Over the next several centuries, **Cauldron** continues to prosper.

- **-400 years:** Shatterhorn is Sundered by the yuan-ti god Merrshaulk's displeasure with the religious leaders there and their inability to drive back the advance of humanity; the yuan-ti presence in the area dwindles to a shadow of its former glory.
- **-200 years:** The red dragon Hookface arrives in the region. His attacks on merchants and cities of the region continue intermittently for a century – no heroes are able to defeat the dragon.
- **-100 years:** Hookface retreats to his lair north of Cauldron with his mate, Taliraxia. The two dragons do not emerge from their lair, although periodically one of their spawn emerges to terrorize the area before being slain or moving on to other regions.
- **-75 years:** Jzadirune is hit with the Vanishing. The gnomes abandon the stronghold and never return.
- **-32 years:** The rainiest winter in centuries results in massive flood damage to the lower reaches of Cauldron. The Flood Festival is founded the next year, and for the next several years, the freakishly wet winters continue before the weather finally returns to normal.
- **-10 years:** Zenith Splintershield disappears into the Underdark on a crusade to cleanse it of evil.

Drace Arlica has connected.



DALLEN

Welcome, brave adventurer!



DRACE

I need to level up my character guys. Am I in the group?

DRACE ARLICA

Our 2nd player arrived! This is Craig Guarisco—long-time friend and player (and Gamemaster himself). In high school, Craig ran *STAR WARS d6* and was a player in my long-running *Earthdawn 1st Edition* campaign. Interestingly enough, he would co-write two *Earthdawn 3rd Edition* books with me [Cathay: The Five Kingdoms Player Guide](#) and [Cathay: The Five Kingdoms Gamemaster Guide](#).

For this campaign, we decided on having Drace be a part of the same pirate crew as Dallen, having survived the purge. He is only now making his way to Cauldron to join up with him. He's a fighter, and carries a pistol he got from some 3rd-party D20 splatbook.

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes. You find them in the library at Bluecrater Academy.

DALLEN

Geez, I haven't seen you since the captain was hanged! Where did you vanish off to?

DRACE

I had bidness.

DUNGEON MASTER

All right, so you guys catch up. Drace helps research info about Cauldron. By the time you're done reading everything, it's nightfall.

DALLEN

Seoni, we should go.

DUNGEON MASTER

She is absorbed in spellbooks. Kyra is praying. Lini fell asleep in a large chair, curled up like a cat.

DALLEN

((Smiles.))

DUNGEON MASTER

Do you go out into the wooded area, as planned?

DALLEN

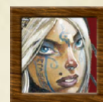
Let's head to that forest and stake out the scene.

The group heads out into the woods...and waits.



DALLEN

((Whispers.)) Hey, Seoni—do you think it's demons?



SEONI

I hope not.

DALLEN

Yeah. Same here. ((Whispers to Lini.)) Hey, what kind of trees are these?

LINI

Pretty ones...

Time passes. Eventually they spy a lone goblin sneaking along... Dallen rushes to cut him off.

GOBLIN SNEAK

Gah! (Surprised.)

DALLEN

'Ello, lubber! Drakthar send ya?

DUNGEON MASTER

He pulls out his short sword and looks around as if looking for an escape.

After smacking the goblin around, they begin to interrogate it...



DRACE

And that's that!

DALLEN

((Grab its weapons.))

GOBLIN SNEAK

What you want?

DRACE

I want macros.

DALLEN

I told you, your good friend Drakthar. I need to speak to him.

GOBLIN SNEAK

Bathhouse... that way... (points to the north)

DALLEN

What are you doing going to a bathhouse, ya filthy creep?

GOBLIN SNEAK

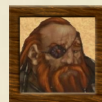
Drakthar! I return to Drakthar!

The group follows the goblin inside, surprising the bathhouse's proprietor, Orak Stonehaven.



DALLEN

'Ello, lubber!



ORAK

Who are you? What is the meaning of this?

DALLEN

Lookin' for Drakthar. 'Eard of him?

ORAK

I... I don't know what you're talking about!

DALLEN

Hey goblin. You know this guy.

GOBLIN SNEAK

Yes. He opens door.

ORAK

I am Orak Stonehaven, and this is my bathhouse! I demand you leave at once!

DALLEN

Hey Drace, show him the interrogator.

DRACE

(Spins the barrel of my six-shooter)

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll for Intimidate.

GOBLIN SNEAK

Hehehe... Drakthar will kill you all...

DALLEN

Smack the back of the goblin's head.

GOBLIN SNEAK

(At Dallen) Grrr...

Drace rolls: 1d20+6 => 11 + 6 = 17

ORAK

I... I don't... I don't know anything! I just let them through!

DRACE

Figures.

DALLEN

We 'ear that a lot in this pit. No one knows nuthin'. Everyone here's an unwittin' pawn.

DUNGEON MASTER

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK!

ORAK

Now who's here?!

Dallen turns to answer the door, but before he can, four wererats burst inside and attack!



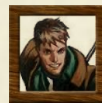
A battle rages for several rounds, until a sleep spell from Seoni puts the remaining 3 rats out, which are quickly finished off with coup de graces. Afterward, they resume their interrogation of Orak.

DALLEN

You know these fellas, mate?

ORAK

No, I swear! I am to allow the goblins through! That is what the master wants!



DALLEN

Through? Through to where?

DUNGEON MASTER

He points to the door on the east wall.

ORAK

Down to his lair...

LINI

Do we have to go into another dungeon?

DRACE

Hoo, boy!

KYRA

What do we do with this dwarf? I sense an evil influence on him.

DALLEN

Do we have rope?

DUNGEON MASTER

Valeros had rope.

DALLEN

Valeros had a listening problem, too. Where is Valeros now?

DUNGEON MASTER

In town getting drunk somewhere.

DRACE

I have 50 ft. or so.

DALLEN

Tie him up.

ORAK

The master will not be pleased.

DRACE

I tie a good 'ol sailors' knot!

DUNGEON MASTER

So, what do you guys do?

DALLEN

Head down into the lair.

DRACE

I cast *magic missiles* at the darkness!

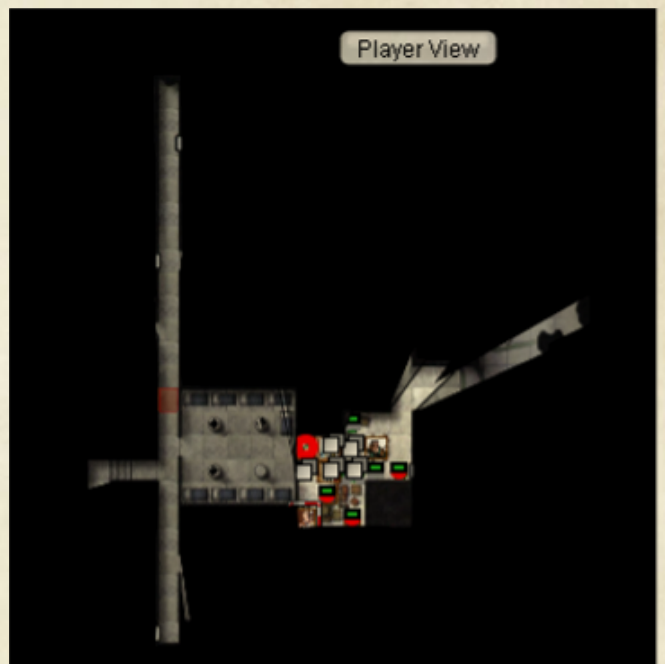
DUNGEON MASTER

lol Ah, it never gets old.

The heroes descend into Drakthar's Way. Within moments, they stumble upon some goblin guards. Drace fires his pistol, which thunders deafeningly through the dark, narrow halls, and soon the entire level of the dungeon descends upon them...



In the end, the PCs were victorious, though Lini and her hawk, Ismadi, were unconscious, Kyra and Seoni were both out of spells, and Dallen and Drace were low on hit points. They decided that it was time to rest, and we called the session to a close. Until next time!



Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.



We last left the heroes in yet another dungeon beneath yet another proprietor's establishment...



They continue to explore, looking for the mysterious Drakthar... and of course, treasure.

DUNGEON MASTER

The hall to your left collapsed some time ago. There is the head of a dwarf on the ground. As you draw closer, you see that it is the head of some statue. It appears to be of some dignified dwarf.



DALLEN

Hey, maybe this is the guy who built the Malachite Fortress.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll your Perception.

Dallen rolls: « 1d20+2 = 15 + 2 = 17 »

DUNGEON MASTER

Based on what you were reading at the Bluecrater Academy, you think this statue's features don't match up.

Eventually they come upon an old temple within the complex...

DUNGEON MASTER

Based on what you were reading at the Bluecrater Academy, you think this statue's features don't match up.

DUNGEON MASTER

At the far end stands a statue of a dwarf, missing its head.

DALLEN

Well I'll be! A headless dwarf... I am going to go get that head we found earlier. Does it fit?

DUNGEON MASTER

When you place the head on the statue, a strange thing happens...



DRACE

Oh, great

DUNGEON MASTER

A light seems to FUSE the head back to the body! The statue's eyes flash open with an intelligent life! Its mouth opens and it speaks...

DALLEN

((Stumble back.))

DUNGEON MASTER

"Beware, mortals, of the Shackleborn! Beware the Prince of Madness! Beware the Thirteen!"

DRACE

((Gun at the ready...))

DUNGEON MASTER

Then it returns to silence, just a statue, cold and lifeless...



KYRA

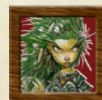
We were just spoken to by a god! (drops to her knees)
This is a statue of the dwarven father, Moradin! It was an omen!

DRACE

What are you rambling about?

DALLEN

What kinda lubber'd whack a head off a god's statue?



LINI

The goblin kind...

DALLEN

Sick little filth bags.

DRACE

Omens don't scare me.



SEONI

Yes, well. I don't like it in here. (Walks out.)

DALLEN

Now that you 'ad to mention it, I not be believin' ya.

DRACE

Who, me?

DALLEN

Yeah.



DRACE

Omens? Scary? Pfft

DALLEN

I'd put fear in the gods, if'n anything, mate.

The fearless heroes continue their search...



DALLEN

Well, what's in here, then?

DUNGEON MASTER

Goblin quarters.

DALLEN

Oh? And do 4 goblins make a hobgoblin?

DUNGEON MASTER

lol

DRACE

By the gods... Search the quarters.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll.

Drace rolls: d20 => 20

DRACE

Booyah!

DUNGEON MASTER

Nat 20! But you don't find anything other than deep puddles of piss, piles of feces (smeared on the walls in writing, with things like "Drakthar is dead, long live Darkthar!") and soiled bedding.

DALLEN

Tain't sure which be worse, the smell of them dead or their lairs!

DRACE

Can't wait to get topside...this place is gettin' a little rank...

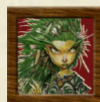


SEONI

I am curious as to what else is down here.

DRACE

Yeah, but you know what they say about curiosity, don't ya?



LINI

Yes. It keeps you young...

GOLARION GNOMES

For those not familiar with Pathfinder, Lini's little comment here alludes to gnomes from Golarion, which don't age as long as they are constantly being intrigued and learning new things. Only through stale routine do they age, thus motivating their restless and ever-curious, roaming natures. This mythology was created by [Erik Mona](#), which I discovered in one of my first creative meetings while at Paizo.

DALLEN

I do not. What do they say?

DRACE

I don't know, either. That's why I'm asking.



KYRA

We we
This is
an ome

DRAC

What a

DALL

What k



LINI

The go

DALLEN

Ifn' it weren't for me curiosity, I'd be a shipwrights apprentice!



SEONI

Pirates. (Shakes head.)

DALLEN

Not a pirate anymore, love.



DRACE

I prefer the term 'privateer'.

DALLEN

Aye, a pirate in a cave is just plain foolish!

DRACE

Yeah, doesn't make a lot of sense now does it?

DALLEN

Aye! ((Slaps your shoulder.)) It doesn't! I think I may've lost me sea legs, anyway.

SEONI

Sigh.

The group follows the cavern as it slopes deeper and deeper into the earth. It isn't long before they are ambushed...



The battle is vicious, but in the end, they are victorious. One of them, a goblin adept, flees with Dallen's starknife stuck in his thigh. Determined not to lose his weapon, Dallen gives chase. He is led into another trap—this time with a human and a tiefling mercenaries! The rest of the group circles around, but soon they are ambushed from the rear...



KYRA

Behind us!



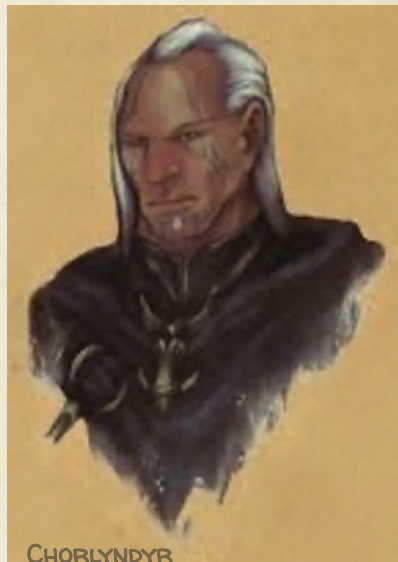
DUNGEON MASTER

Chorlyndyr casts *magic missiles*!

Dungeon Master rolls: $2d4+2 \Rightarrow 6 + 2 = 8$

DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen takes 10 dmg! Kallev casts *darkness*! The room seems to dim menacingly!





DUNGEON MASTER

Drace, you hear Kyra screaming behind you...

Drace rushes to see what the commotion is about...

DRACE

Shit...



They are attacked on two fronts!

DYNAMIC DUNGEONS

I've never been the type of DM to allow a dungeon to remain static. If players start making noise, the rest of the dungeon will descend upon them. Which is what is happening here. This always creates very intense battles, as these modules are designed with very specific encounters for very specific challenge ratings. I think at this moment, they were fighting 2 or 3 encounters at once. This all feeds into my DMing philosophy of CHOICES MATTER.



Drakthar turned out to be a vampiric bugbear, who led the second attack to their rear!



DRAKTHAR

Foolish humans! Bow to my will!!!

Though they come close to death (and Drace learns to dislike shock lizards), they manage to defeat their enemies. A well-placed scorching ray (two to be exact) from Seoni sent Drakthar fleeing for its coffin as a gaseous cloud. They gave chase back to its lair...



DUNGEON MASTER

Seoni casts *elemental ray*!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+3 \Rightarrow 18 + 3 = 21$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d6+2 \Rightarrow 4 + 2 = 6$

DUNGEON MASTER

The beam catches the goblin in the face, and it falls off the stairs backward!

DRACE

Cue the Wilhelm Scream!

Inside Drakthar's lair, they are confronted by its guardian... its animated throne!



After dealing with this threat, Drakthar rises from his coffin!

DRAKTHAR

Look into my eyes!

Drace's silver bullets send Drakthar back into its coffin, where Kyra drives a stake through its dark heart, ending Drakthar's reign of terror!



However, they were no closer to discovering the mystery behind Drakthar's Way, since they had killed all of their enemies, leaving none alive for questioning.

So they continued to explore the natural cavern, following its slopes deeper and deeper into the darkness...

Soon they come to a cavern filled with half-orc mercenaries led by a dwarf named Xoden Nightshield...



**XODEN**

Who are you?? Where is Drakthar! I am tired of waiting!
Where are my men?

DRACE

Drathar is... warming by the fire!

XODEN

This is insufferable! The Blue Duke will not be happy with this! Made to wait here like peasants! Where is Kallev and Chorlyndyr? Why have they not returned?

**DALLEN**

What is all this blathering about? Who in Besmera's Lust are you, ugly?

XODEN

Blathering, you say?!

DRACE

He did say blathering.

DALLEN

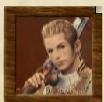
Kallev? The devil woman?

XODEN

"Ugly?" I am Xoden Nighshield! First captain in the Blue Duke's mercenary army! That's who I am! I demand to see Drakthar!

DALLEN

An important man like you, waiting for a some filthy bugbear.... A captain you said?

**DRACE**

He did say captain.

XODEN

That's right! Here to negotiate a price on behalf of the Blue Duke himself!

DALLEN

Oh... with Drakthar?

DRACE

A price for what?

XODEN

Through Drakthar. He's just a middleman.

DALLEN

Not anymore.

XODEN

(To Drace) Some rich noble in Cauldron wants to hire mercenaries as guards. He—or she—wants it kept secret, so we must sneak in through Drakthar's Way. Where is Drakthar? Where are my men?

DALLEN

They are with our noble employer. That was a test to make sure ye are still unknowing.

XODEN

You work for the noble?

DALLEN

Aye, captain. That is why Drakthar's out of the picture!

**DUNGEON MASTER**

Roll Bluff.

Dallen rolls: « 1d20+7 = 15 + 7 = 22 »

XODEN

Out? Oh, so you killed him, eh?

DALLEN

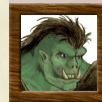
Aye. My employer's told me he nearly fumbled our contract, mate.

GOBLIN SNEAK

(A goblin appears from the shadows!) You killed the master!!!

XODEN

Boys, shut that thing up.

**HALF-ORC MERCENARY**

Sure thing, boss.

GOBLIN SNEAK

Gahhh!!!

DRACE

One down.

XODEN

Well, then? Where are my men?

DALLEN

We be pirates from Sasserine, in the employ of our good patron.



XODEN

I see. Pirates of Sasserine have a deadly reputation.

DRACE

This is true.

XODEN

Well then, where are my men? The two I sent to negotiate on behalf of the Blue Duke? I grow tired of asking.

DRACE

(Twirls gun.)

DALLEN

Aye, they be speaking on the contract right now.

XODEN

(re: gun – Looks impressed.)

DUNGEON MASTER

Xoden moves forward—he sees Kyra, Seoni, and Lini in the back.

XODEN

There are more of ya back there, I see... Women? Heh, kept in the back where they belong.

DALLEN

Aye, mate. A few choice tokens to sweeten the deal.

XODEN

You truly are pirates!



DRACE

And they have yet to be spoiled...

XODEN

Those are part of the deal? Well then, the wait was worth it after all! Eh, boys?

HALF-ORC MERCENARY

Hehe, a fine deal!

DALLEN

Come this way mate and have a look-see. This is Kyra. Say hello, Kyra.



KYRA

Hello... (Pulls out her sword.)

XODEN

What the...?!

DALLEN

((Attack him.))

DRACE

This would be a good cliffhanger.



DUNGEON MASTER

You're right. *Until next time!*



Server started.

Dallen Yadwick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.

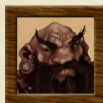
When we last left our heroes, they had just Bluffed and ambushed a dwarf mercenary captain named Xoden and his 6 half-orc soldiers!



Xoden goes down fast, but the 6 half-orcs surround Drace and deliver punishing damage!



Dallen rolls: The Rapier drives home for « $1d6+1 = 2 + 1 = 3$ » and the starknife leaves its mark for « $1d4+2 = 1 + 2 = 3$ ».



XODEN

Aarrgh!!!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+7 \Rightarrow 13 + 7 = 20$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+9 \Rightarrow 20 + 9 = 29$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+9 \Rightarrow 14 + 9 = 23$

Dungeon Master rolls: $3d10+12 \Rightarrow 21 + 12 = 33$

DUNGEON MASTER

The first half-orc smacks the hawk out of the air, and the second and third impale it to the soft dirt floor! The bird's wings flutter briefly and then lie still...



LINI

No! Ismadi!!!

ANIMAL COMPANIONS

I have a reputation as a DM of always killing animal companions. But to be fair, I don't try to—they're always so much weaker than the party in terms of hps, it's hard to keep them alive!

Kyra is knocked unconscious soon after. The battle looks grim, until Seoni uses her necklace of fireballs Type II that they had found earlier in Drakthar's lair...

DUNGEON MASTER

Seoni tears a black bead off of her necklace and throws it at the back wall! It erupts in a huge fireball, the roaring flames swallowing the half-orcs!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+1 \Rightarrow 9 + 1 = 10$

Dungeon Master rolls: $4d6 \Rightarrow 18$



After the traditional looting of the bodies, the PCs continue to follow Drakthar's Way, surprised to find that it spills out at the base of Cauldron's slope...



The PCs returned to Cauldron, heading to see Captain Skellerang to inform him of what had occurred...



**TERSEON SKELLERANG**

Good morning. You look like you have all been through the Hells and back!

DALLEN

Mornin', cap'n.

DRACE

You are only half right, Terseon.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

Hm. Well, what happened?

DALLEN

((Tell him about the noble, the mercenary bodyguards, and the Blue Duke.))

TERSEON SKELLERANG

Is that right? Hm. I can't say I blame them for wanting to hire bodyguards.

DALLEN

Had a feeling you'd say that.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

But it irritates me greatly that they don't just give us more money for more guards! I will look into this matter.

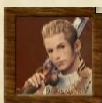
DALLEN

Why buy everyone a guard, mate.

The PCs then head back to the bathhouse.

DUNGEON MASTER

When you arrive, you find Orak inside, still bound.

**DRACE**

Quality knot, that was!

DALLEN

Aight, mate.

**ORAK**

What... what happened?

DALLEN

Who's this noble you're working for?

ORAK

(Looks around as if waking from a long dream.)

DALLEN

Don't be pullin' that, Orak.

ORAK

What... what happened? Who are you? Why are there corpses in my bathhouse?! And a dead goblin!!!

DALLEN

You were working for some goblins and a hobgoblin.

ORAK

Hah! I would never work for goblins!

DALLEN

Smugglin' mercenary bodyguards in here for some filthy noble scum. And we want you to tell us who...

ORAK

Bodyguards for goblins?? This makes no sense. Why would goblins need bodyguards? Untie me at once!

DALLEN

((Untie him.))

ORAK

(Rubs his sore wrists) Who are you people?

DALLEN

((Show him the tunnel.))

**DUNGEON MASTER**

He seems suitably shocked.

ORAK

If this story is true, is the case... then thank you! You can come here whenever you need! Free of charge! My baths are the best in town!

DRACE

I'll bet.

ORAK

Er, once I get these corpses out of here, that is... I hope this doesn't hurt my business, not with the Flood Festival starting tomorrow!

DALLEN

Flood Festival?

ORAK

You're not from around here? Tomorrow begins the annual Flood Festival! Biggest event of the year!

DALLEN

Is there a flood?!

ORAK

There would be without the festival!

DRACE

That's all we need.

DUNGEON MASTER

You just read about this at the Blue Crater Academy, you know.

DALLEN

What do you want from me? I'm a pirate.

DRACE

Privateer.

DALLEN

Yeah, ex-privateer.

DUNGEON MASTER

Orak freshens your memory...

ORAK

Many years ago, it would flood every winter. Until one year, the flood went up several streets! The damage was very expensive, so the churches of Cauldron banded together and created *wands of control water*. Throughout the storm season, they would patrol the waters, and keep them low. People celebrated, and it became a big festival. Now it's the biggest, most anticipated event of the year! I make my most money that night!

**DALLEN**

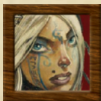
'Cause lubbers want a bath?

ORAK

People from all around the region come to Cauldron for the festival. I told you, my bathhouse is the best!

DRACE

To celebrate the flood that isn't happening, people submerge themselves in water?

**SEONI**

Ironic.

ORAK

Well, there is a lot of other stuff that goes on, too—all kinds of contests and events, balls and parades!

DALLEN

Well, I tell ya what, Orak... We'll keep this wee fiasco between the lot of us, and perhaps it won't hurt business too much.

ORAK

Thank you! You truly are heroes! I'll spread the word of your bravery, minus the saving me part, of course.

DALLEN

But I reckon you ought to tell us anything suspicious?

ORAK

I'll keep my eye open!

**DRACE**

Ha ha ha

ORAK

I was an adventurer once, you know. Lost my eye. Found a decanter of endless water. Decided to open up shop. Saw too many friends die, I did. No matter how many evils you put down, another is there to take its place.

DRACE

It's a dangerous road we travel.

ORAK

Indeed. But as I said, this place is always open to ya! And tell the proprietor of the Tipped Tankard that I sent you. He'll give you a discount. We help each other out. It's a nice place to be staying at while you're in Cauldron.

DALLEN

What's the Rusty Trambone across the street?

ORAK

Brass Trumpet? Spendy, that is.

DALLEN

What'do ya say Seoni? Ready for a dip? (winks)

SEONI

Sigh.

DALLEN

Lini, whaddya gonna do about Ismadi?

LINI

Mourn her...

DRAGE

The poor thing.

LINI

When my grief has passed, I will call upon another companion.

After saying their goodbyes to the one-eyed dwarf, the group headed to the Tipped Tankard on the northern part of town...



DALLEN

Are you the proprietor of this establishment?



GRATHIS

Aye, Grathis is the name. You all here for the Flood Festival?

DALLEN

Nah, we've been swagger'n about the town for a time now. Just had some business with Orak; he sent us over this way.

GRATHIS

Oh? Well then, a friend of that one-eyed dwarf is a friend of mine! Room and board for a day is 1 gp each.



The group pays for a month's food and lodging and gets some much-needed rest. They are awakened later in the day by a messenger bearing a scroll...

QUESTIONS & CLUES

- Is the story of a "Crater Lake Monster" just a myth...?
- Who is the Blue Duke, and why is he trying to smuggle half-orc mercenaries into Cauldron?
- According to the history of Cauldron that the group had learned at the Bluecrater Academy Library, the great red dragon Hookface has not been seen in the area for many year... what became of the terrifying beast, I wonder...?

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 4TH EDITION VS. PATHFINDER

Some may remember the days of 4E. There was a profound disappointment by many gamers at the time, who found the changes and direction to be too tactical and combat oriented. Thus, Pathfinder was born—the continuation of D&D 3rd Edition in a slightly revised format. Now, I don't want to open old wounds with the debate, but in my personal opinion, I enjoy PF more.

I have perhaps a unique perspective. Before starting at Paizo and helping with the launch of 1st Edition, I was in a weekly game of 4E ran by [Greg Bilsland](#) who was a developer at WoTC at the time. There were other pros there too, like writer/designer [Gwen Kestrel](#) (whose character had a crush on my dragonborn fighter, Lore), and [Chris Tulach](#) among others. People who were neck deep in 4E, behind the scenes, so I was getting a pretty authentic 4E experience.

Now, Greg is a great guy, and a fine DM (he was running a homebrew campaign), but out of our regular 6-hour sessions, at least 5 hours were combat. Out of those 5 hours, I was spending at least 4 hours sitting around waiting for my turn.

When I was working at Paizo, I had very little actual time to play the revised Pathfinder rules, except for playtesting [The Bastards of Erebus](#) with [Sean K Reynolds](#), because I was too busy, you know, working on it.

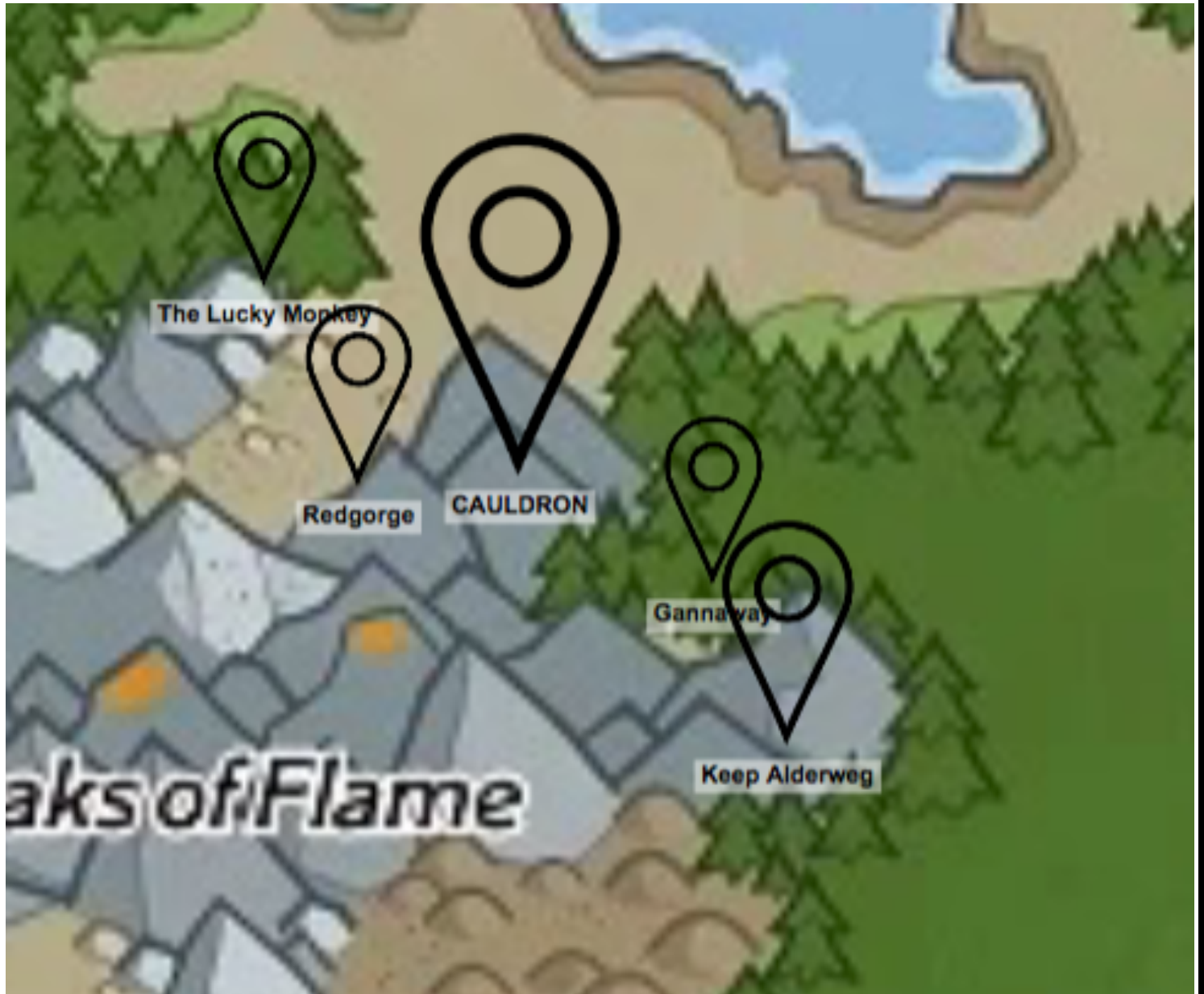
I specifically remember around this time in this campaign realizing how much I actually enjoyed the system. It was a true passion project from the folks at Paizo, and I'm honored to have been able to be a part of it.

With that being said, I have gone back to D&D with 5th Edition, but Pathfinder will always hold a special place in my heart.





Cauldron and the surrounding region.





South of Cauldron.





Northeast of Cauldron.







CHAPTER THREE: FLOOD SEASON



DALLEN

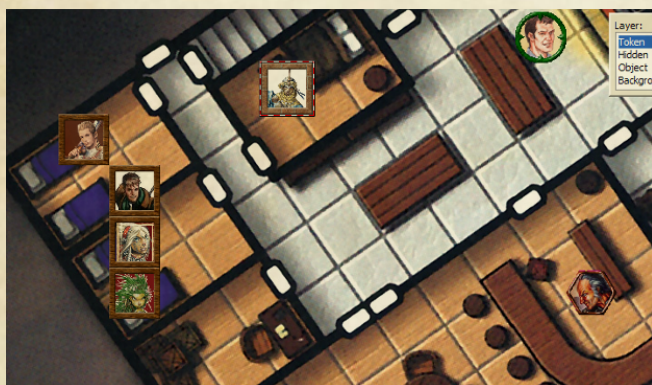
((Read the scroll.))

DUNGEON MASTER

Apparently, word has spread about Cauldron's new heroes. Overnight you have all become celebrities. Saving the kidnapped children and a priest... encountering a beholder... Putting a stop to the goblins and killing a bugbear vampire... Word has gotten around.

Of course, it doesn't hurt that it's a huge festival coming up. So now you've been invited to the

Demonskar Ball.



DALLEN

ha ha ha! I'm gonna get so drunk, mate!

DUNGEON MASTER

It's a big event full of a bunch of Cauldron's nobles that helps kick off the event.

DRACE

Time to cut a rug!

DUNGEON MASTER

It begins this evening at 6pm.

DALLEN

We need some nicer clothes, you scurvy dog.

DRACE

What's wrong with what I got on??

DALLEN

Well, it's been torn ta shreds and covered in blood for the last couple o' hours. You smell worse than the capt'n's ol piss bottle he kept in his cabin!

DUNGEON MASTER

Do you guys buy new clothes and get cleaned up then before the ball?

DRACE

Yup.

Later...





DRACE

I need to have a woman on each arm...any takers...?
(looks to the girls in the back)

SEONI

Sigh.

FOPPISH DALLEN

((Opens the door and bows to the group.))



BESWINK LATHENMIRE

Welcome to my home, honored guests. I am Beswink Lathenmire.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Hello, Lord Lathenmire.

BESWINK LATHENMIRE

(nods) This is my wife, Liorial.

DRACE

Well met.

FOPPISH DALLEN

It was good of you to invite us.



LIORIAL

Hello.

BESWINK LATHENMIRE

Welcome to the Demonskar Ball, where we honor Surabar Spellmason's defeat of the demon at the Demonskar.

BESWINK LATHENMIRE

Please, make yourselves comfortable.

DRACE

When do we eat?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Hello there, my name is Dallen Yadwick. And who might you be?



LORD ASLAXIN I

I am Lord Zachary Aslaxin the I. And this is my son, Zachary Aslaxin II.



ZACHARY ASLAXIN II

Honored, I'm sure.

DUNGEON MASTER

Zachary II is part of the Stormblades. Both of you have heard of them—a local adventuring group, sons and daughters of nobles.

DALLEN

I did not know I was to attend such an event until but a few hours ago.

LIORIAL LATHENMIRE

You are most welcome here—we have all heard of your exploits.

ZACHARY ASLAXIN II

Hmm. Yes, most impressive, I suppose.

DRACE

Why, thank you.



CORA LATHENMIRE

Indeed.

DUNGEON MASTER

Cora approaches—another of the Stormbaldes. Her parents are successful weapon importers and hosts of this party, whom you just met a moment before.

FOPPISH DALLEN

I was hoping I could get a few tales yarded from you.

CORA LATHENMIRE

Me?

FOPPISH DALLEN

From any of the prestigious Stormblades ((Smiles to Cora and Zachary.))



ANNAH TASKERHILL

I'm afraid our latest exploit is from a month ago, when we cleared out a tribe of kobolds who were living in a lava vent below town.

DUNGEON MASTER

Annah is another Stormblade. There are four in all.

FOPPISH DALLEN

This is my good friend and associate, Drace Arlica.



DRACE

Kolbolds! How terrifying!

FOPPISH DALLEN

Is there no end to the menaces beneath this beset town?

ANNAH TASKERHILL

Are both of you looking forward to the festival?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Aye, that we are. I could use a bit of the less-dangerous excitement.

DRACE

Of course we are!



CORA LATHENMIRE

Oh? Tired of adventure already?

DRACE

Well...er...no of course not!

ZACHARY ASLAXIN II

We are planning on exploring more of the vents soon.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Yeah. Perhaps we could join together on an expedition.

ANNAH TASKERHILL

Perhaps.



ZACHARY ASLAXIN II

We heard you adventured in Zenith Splintershield's Malachite Fortress?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Twasn't really adventure. I was looking for missing children.

ANNAH TASKERHILL

Ah yes, we did hear that. That old fool crusaded into the Darklands and was never seen again.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Yes, very foolish..... but doesn't it bother you that there be an unguarded tunnel to the Underdark, just beneath the city?



LORD ANKHIN TASKERHILL

Come along Annah, I wish you to speak to the Lord and Lady Vanderboren about a certain matter.

ANNAH TASKERHILL

Yes, father. If you will excuse me.

FOPPISH DALLEN

It was good to meet you Lady Taskerhill. (looks sideways at Drace... and then off in the direction of the Taskerhills))

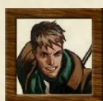
DRACE

What? ((holds up his arms))

FOPPISH DALLEN

((Rolls his eyes.))

The conversation continues. Finally, Dallen & Drace excuse themselves to find some wine. They split up, and eventually Dallen comes upon a room where a poker game is underway between three nobles...

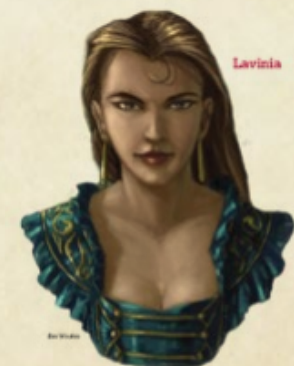


FOPPISH DALLEN

Oh, excuse me. I was looking for the kitchen.

ANNAH TASKERHILL

You took a wrong turn.



LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

Would you like to join us? We are playing poker.

DRACE

Did someone say poker? (go wandering back over)

ANNAH TASKERHILL

I'm sure they have better things to do, Lavinia.

DRACE

So. Cards, huh?

DUNGEON MASTER

You recognize the beardless guy sitting with them as the fourth Stormblade.

FOPPISH DALLEN

I would have to pass, but my friend Drace Arlica here is quite the poker player. Has his own deck, even. ((leans forward and winks)) I wouldn't let him use it though!!! ((laughs))

DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen, roll your Perception.

Foppish Dallen rolls: « 1d20+2 = 15 + 2 = 17 »

DUNGEON MASTER

You recognize the beardless guy and the girl who invited you to play poker as a brother and sister from Sasserine. Children of nobles, Vanthus and Lavinia.



VANTHUS VANDERBOREN

Hmmm... Interesting mark you have there, sailor. It seems our friend here has been to Sasserine.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Oh, you are the Vanderborens of Sasserine ((rubs the mark on his neck)).

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

Yes, we are. Are you sure you won't join us?

DRACE

Thought they had a Sasserinian look about them...



TODD VANDERBOREN

You know these people, cousins?

VANTHUS VANDERBOREN

Not personally, no.

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

I'd like to (winks).

FOPPISH DALLEN

((Sits.))

VANTHUS VANDERBOREN

Sister. Our parents would not approve of you consorting with...privateers.

FOPPISH DALLEN

((Unbuttons his top button, showing more of his scars.))

DUNGEON MASTER

She seems impressed. Her brother and cousin less so.

TODD VANDERBOREN

The ante is 2 gp.

DRACE

((Sits down.))

DUNGEON MASTER

The rules for poker are simple. Everyone rolls a d20. No hidden rolls. Everyone bets and rolls again. Highest sum wins. If you have Bluff, you may use it instead of a regular d20 (but you must have ranks in the skill to do so; add your Bluff bonus to your second roll).

The first hand is played...

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

Looks like I win.

DRACE

Naturally.

More hands are played. The PCs begin to do better.

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

You got lucky this time, sailor (winks).

TODD VANDERBOREN

Well, it appears my luck—as well as my patience—has run out. If you will all excuse me.

DRACE

Funny...the more I play, the luckier I get... (wink back).

Kyra enters.



KYRA

Gambling?

DRACE

Kyra, meet our friends, the Vanderborens.

KYRA

That money could go to the needy.

VANTHUS VANDERBOREN

Spare us, priest.

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

Brother, don't be rude. Here (flicks a gold coin to Kyra).

DRACE

Yes, Kyra, I know—but we need it.

KYRA

Where is Seoni and Lini?

DRACE

Haven't seen 'em.

KYRA

Well, have fun (leaves).

VANTHUS VANDERBOREN

Pleasant lady.

FOPPISH DALLEN

So, where were we?

VANTHUS VANDERBOREN

Nice sword she had.

FOPPISH DALLEN

I got a nicer one (wink).

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

I bet you do.

VANTHUS VANDERBOREN

Women shouldn't carry weapons. Another hand?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Yes, another hand.

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

Ante up.

FOPPISH DALLEN

What brings you to Cauldron.

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

Visiting our aunt and uncle. You?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Just getting away from the sea...

They play more hands until finally DalLEN and Drace excuse themselves and continue to explore the Demonskar Ball...



**EMBRIL**

Hello. You must be Dallen.

FOPPISH DALLEN

I am! ((Bow deeply.))

EMBRIL

I am Embril, High Priestess of Kelemvor.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Well met, High Priestess. How are you enjoying the ball?

EMBRIL

Well enough.

**ALURAD**

(whispers something to the tiefling next to him)

FOPPISH DALLEN

((turns to Ardeth)) Are those... face tattoos? If you don't mind me asking...

**ARDETH**

Yes. Of a scorpion. The scorpion is nature's perfect killer.

FOPPISH DALLEN

They're not killers. No more than a shark is of the sea.

ARDETH

But they *are* the perfect killers, for when they kill, they have no remorse. No compunction about whom or what they kill.

DRACE

Because they have no intelligence. They're bugs.

**FREIJA**

You are from Sasserine.

DRACE

We are from Sasserine.

FREIJA

Yes. And you are here in Cauldron because you do not wish to be found.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Are you implying something, lady?

FREIJA

Only that Cauldron is a good place to go when one does not wish to be found. (She leans in close.) Or when one does not know one's true nature...

ARDETH

(To Drace) Most mortals have no intelligence. Most go about their daily routines with no conception of what drives them. Clouded by their short-sighted desires.

DRACE

I agree...

FOPPISH DALLEN

Is that the difference? To have long-sighted desires makes you somehow more intelligent?

ARDETH

To control your desires and not allow them to control you. To know that there is more in the multiverse than such transitory pleasures and accomplishments.

**SHEBELETH**

Now Ardeth, not all mortals have such a keen understanding of the ways of the world.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Well, I desire a glass of wine and a good dance! A foolish mortal I be!

DRACE

And I the men's room. How shortsighted is that?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Er, what do you mean "mortals"?

ALURAD

I'm sure she meant nothing by it.



THEARRYN

Ardeth... just doesn't have a way with words...



FETOR

Heh, indeed...

FOPPISH DALLEN

Aye, I know how that is. (laughs uncomfortably)



NULIN

(slaps your shoulder) Here, take my wine... (hands you his glass)

FOPPISH DALLEN

((takes it)) Thanks good sir, I am Dallen Yadwrick and you are?

NULIN

You may call me Nulin.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Well met, Nulin. You've sated the desires of a shortsighted mortal.

SHEBELETH

It was a good thing you did. Saving the boy, Terrem.

FREIJA

Yes. Stopping those foolish slavers.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Well I may have been an unthinking pirate at one time, but I am trying to atone.

ARDETH

I hope you did not kill any of them... too quickly.

FOPPISH DALLEN

I didn't really save the boy.

ALURAD

That is not what we heard.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Well, apparently Cauldron has a good natured beholder in its depths.

NULIN

Ah, we heard that part as well.



KYAN

Fortunate, that you were able to stop them until the beholder came.

DRACE

((Walks back up, filling the two glasses.))

FREIJA

Your friend has returned.

DRACE

Oh... I see you've already found a glass, Dallen.

FOPPISH DALLEN

(re: the beholder) That part was all up to the fortunes, for sure.

FETOR

Fortune favors the bold.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Yeah, when the shady clouds of stormy Besmera do not block its way. Well if you'd excuse me I have a few friends around I need to check on... Thanks again, Nulin, for the wine.

EMBRIL

Enjoy the festival, Dallen and Drace of Sasserine.

Happy to get away from the unsettling group, Dallen and Drace continue to wander the Lathenmire mansion...



LORD VHALANTRU

Well, hello.

FOPPISH DALLEN

This isn't the bathroom, now is it? ((LAUGHS))

LORD VHALANTRU

You must be the city's heroes of the hour!

FOPPISH DALLEN

I am Dallen Yadwrick. And who is this beautiful woman?



LADY THIFRANE

I am the Lady Thifrane.

LORD VHALANTRU

Incredible tale—meeting a beholder beneath our city?

FOPPISH DALLEN

You should have been there, not that you are want to roam beneath the city.

LORD VHALANTRU

Heh... Yes, well, too much excitement for one such as myself.



JIL

Hello there.

FOPPISH DALLEN

And who might this be? ((bows and takes her hand to kiss it))

JIL

You may call me Jil... or whatever you want.

LORD VHALANTRU

It seems Jil has taken a liking to you.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Well met, Lady Jil.

LADY THIFRANE

She takes a liking to everyone.

DRACE

A pleasure.

JIL

Lady? Hah! I'm afraid I'm not nearly so refined as our fine nobles here.

LORD VHALANTRU

Nonsense Jil, you are the very picture of etiquette.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Well, I am sure we all know that refinement does not come with money and titles.

JIL

You wish, Vhalantru.

FOPPISH DALLEN

If no noble you be what brings you here Jil?

JIL

Business.

LADY THIFRANE

I do not know this one. (To Drace.)

LORD VHALANTRU

Hm. Yes, who are you? That is an interesting weapon you have there. A gun, is it?

DRACE

It is a gun, yes.

LORD VHALANTRU

Fascinating. So, you did not face down the beholder with your companion here?

DRACE

Wasn't in town yet. You have not seen a gun before?

LORD VHALANTRU

I have heard of them. Seen drawings. I'm a bit of an artist. A sculptor, actually. At my mansion, I have statues of every hero ever to grace this fine city of ours. Perhaps one day I will sculpt the two of you...

DRACE

Would you care to hold it? (Pull out the gun in an unthreatening way.)

LORD VHALANTRU

Oh, I'm afraid not. I never carry a weapon!

DRACE

((Laughs.))

FOPPISH DALLIN

(To Jil) ...and what kind of business are you in. My friends and I have come into a little coin perhaps I could procure your services.

JIL

I'm afraid my services are already procured for the time being. But perhaps some other time...

FOPPISH DALLIN

Perhaps...

LORD VHALANTRU

So, how long do you gentlemen plan on staying in Cauldron?

FOPPISH DALLIN

Keep inviting us to your balls and we may never leave!

LORD VHALANTRU

Haha, yes, well you are most fortunate to be here for the Flood Festival. Aren't they Lady Thiffrane?

LADY THIFFRANE

Oh, yes. Quite fortunate.

FOPPISH DALLIN

I've never experienced it. What type of events will be held?

LORD VHALANTRU

It is a true joy. You will just have to wait and see!

DRACE

We are looking forward to it...

FOPPISH DALLIN

Well it was nice to have met you Lord, Lady, and..... Jil.

FOPPISH DALLIN

If no noble you be what brings you here Jil?

LORD VHALANTRU

Yes, you as well!

DRACE

A real pleasure.

JIL

Goodbye, Handsome 1 and Handsome 2.

LADY THIFFRANE

So unrefined.

JIL

Pssh.

The heroes continue to explore the ball and soon stumble upon Terseon, Skylar, and the Lord Mayor of Cauldron.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

Well, if it isn't our latest heroes!

FOPPISH DALLIN

Terseon.

**LORD MAYOR SEVEREN**

Ah, this is they?

FOPPISH DALLIN

Well met.

DRACE

Yes, we are they.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

I was just telling the Lord Mayor about you. We have come to a decision regarding the mercenaries you informed us about!

FOPPISH DALLIN

You'll be happy to know I've been rubbing our noble hosts for more money for your coffers.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

Why thank you! But you will be pleased to know that the Lord Mayor has raised the taxes!

DRACE

Ah, that ought to go over well with the people.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

We are raising the taxes so we can afford them to help guard Cauldron!

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

The people will live. These are dangerous times we are in.

FOPPISH DALLEN

The mercenaries we fought?

TERSEON SKELLERANG

Yes. But don't worry, they don't take it personally. Business is business.

DRACE

Killing is killing...

DRACE

Right right. I made more room for advancement. ((laughs))

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

Well, soon Cauldron's security will be airtight.

DRACE

Let's hope so.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

Indeed, they are coming in next week!

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

I hope you are enjoying the ball.

FOPPISH DALLEN

We have so far.

DRACE

It's been...great.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

This is just a little something the Lord and Lady like to throw in honor of Spellmason's defeat of the vile demon of the Demonskar.

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

Even though the foul beast still rules there...

TERSEON SKELLERANG

We will see you at the festival later!

FOPPISH DALLEN

Of course.

Having explored the ball, the heroes decide to go out into the city and experience the Flood Festival... but we'll save that for later. Until next time!

Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.

Pirg Goblinlover has connected.

Deanna has connected.



The players have just left the Lathenmire Manor, ending the Demonskar Ball. Kyra is called back to her church, and so leaves the group, promising she will always be nearby if needed.



FULL HOUSE!

For the first time in this campaign, we have a full party of 4 players! Two new PCs joined this session. The first was our pal Tim McLaughlin, who made a half-ogre barbarian named Pirg Goblinlover. Pirg recently arrived in Cauldron with the newly acquired mercenary group. Though perfect for such a job, Pirg was dismissed from his duties due to his undisciplined nature.

The second player is a guy named Jeremy (co-worker of Justin's), who made a human cleric, Deanna who worships the god Torm. She arrived in Cauldron only moments before meeting the group, having come to assist the Church of Iomedae during the Flood Festival.

The party decided to enjoy the Flood Festival together, first heading back to their inn to partake in a drinking contest...



DUNGEON MASTER

The room is actually filled with many drunken townsfolk. A thick, greasy smoke fills the air.



DALLEN

I smell a fist fight!

The crowd eagerly watches the contest, roaring its approval. It comes as no surprise when the half-ogre wins.

DALLEN

hiccup Can ogres even get drunk? *stumbles and sits*

DUNGEON MASTER

Pirg, you win 10gp.



PIRG

Sweet.

DEANNA

(falls over a chair)

PIRG

drinks another

DUNGEON MASTER

Now that the contest is over, the crowd disintegrates into little pockets of conversation.



GRATHIS

Half-ogre! What's yer name?

PIRG

Pirg is my name!

GRATHIS

Well, Pirg, come back tomorrow if you wish to face the champion, Lord Vhalantru!

PIRG

I will be here!

DALLEN

All hail Lord Flappytrue!

GRATHIS

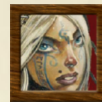
Grand prize: 30 gps!

PIRG

Oooh, lotsa shinies!

DALLEN

...and his huge purse!



SEONI

Sigh... men.

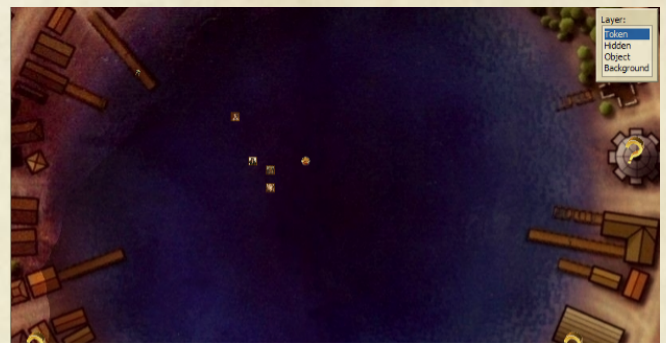
DUNGEON MASTER

re there any other festivities you wish to partake in?

PIRG

To the monster hunt!

The group then heads to Crater Lake, to participate in the annual Crater Lake Monster Hunt...



SEONI

Yes, yes. Well you guys enjoy your monster hunt; Lini and I will stay here.

DUNGEON MASTER

Who all is going to the monster hunt, then?

PIRG

I am!

DUNGEON MASTER

Anyone joining Pirg?



DEANNA

Sure, I'll go. *bumping into someone*

DUNGEON MASTER

Random man: Hey! You made me spill my ale! Oh, excuse me, priestess... didn't mean nothin' by it...

DEANNA

Sorry...



DRACE

Sure, I could stand a good hunt.

DALLEN

Yeah you *staggers and points at a completely different person* come on Drace!



DUNGEON MASTER

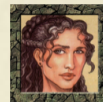
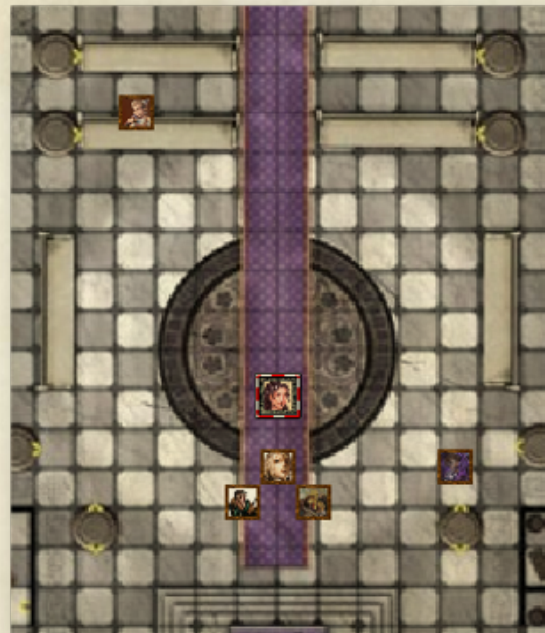
So, the monster hunt is a mock hunt set on Crater Lake. You are hunting the mythological/legendary **Crater Lake Monster** that supposedly lives in its brackish depths. Rowboats fill the waters, and there float little paper boats folded into the likeness of monsters everywhere. The object is to row after them. If you snatch up the right one, which is enchanted to display an illusion when caught, you win.

Right now, the weather is mild, with an occasional sprinkle, though the clouds promise a heavy rain.

DALLEN

Drinking and boating!!! It's like the good ol' days, huh Drace?

The group tries valiantly, but alas, none of them catch the Crater Lake Monster! Afterward, Deanna decides to head to her temple. The others join her...



JENYA

Deanna! Thank the heavens you have arrived! I have disastrous news!

DEANNA

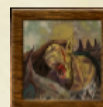
Oh, no! What is it?

JENYA

I just received a sending spell message from the church's high cleric, Sarcem Delasharn: "At Lucky Monkey. Have sight wands. Tavern's been attacked. Bandits led by barbaric apeman. Mortally wounded. Retreated to basement. They know we're here. Send assistance!!!"

DALLEN

Hey, that sounds like you, Pirg!



PIRG

Uh, oh...

DEANNA

We have to go at once! Will you all help me save him?

PIRG

Any goblins to save there? They call me “Pirg Goblinlover.”

DALLEN

No time to waste, you oaf; let's go!

PIRG

Okay...

JENYA

This will not be forgotten... Sarcem had traveled to Sasserine to purchase *wands of control water* for the festival... I fear the worst...

DALLÉN

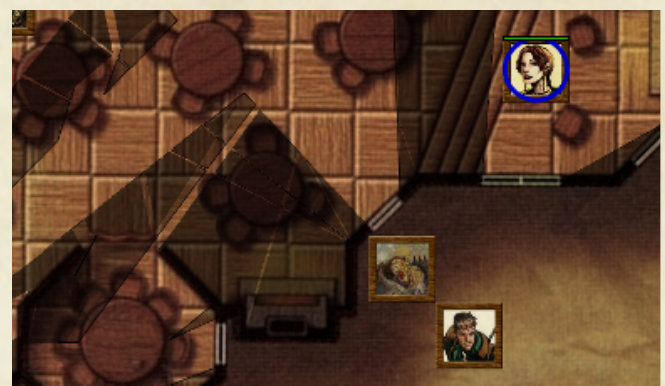
...and it promises to rain...



It takes the group a day to reach the Lucky Monkey Inn, which is located to the northwest of Cauldron. When they arrive, Dallen and Pirg scout out the front of the building, peering in through windows...

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS?

I've never been the biggest fan of random encounters unless it's tied to a choice. For example, the group can go by road, or cut through the forest to save time—but if so, they have to roll for random encounters. Again, CHOICES MATTER! But in this case, it's a straight shot to the Lucky Monkey, and I feel random encounters detract from the momentum. I know other DMs feel differently, and if this were a sandbox campaign I'd do it, but on a linear adventure path, I often skip them entirely.



DUNGEON MASTER

"At first sight, the Lucky Monkey doesn't look all that unusual. The roadhouse itself sits to the east of the road, partially surrounded by the dense jungle. The building is old and well used—the chimneys stained with soot, the roof sagging, the wood siding weathered and stained from last year's mildew. A small stable stands to the building's side in a similar condition. The façade of the building sports numerous carved wooden monkeys, many of which are engaged in risky, death-defying stunts. As you step closer, though, you begin to see signs that something terrible has recently happened here—a broken window... a spray of blood against the wall... crushed plants and churned up earth..."

DALLEN

Shall we go in?

DRACE

Yeah, I'm thirsty from the damn road dust.

DALLEN

I figure we best pretend we know nothing of what has gone on.

The adventurers enter...

Tales of the Multiverse

Something I hadn't mentioned yet is that this was the 2nd time running SCAP. The first time was Fall through Winter of '05, and we played every Saturday (in person). Justin wasn't in that campaign, but Craig (aka Drace) was, along with 4 other players. (Craig remembered shockingly little about the campaign by the time we started this one.)

In that run-through in this moment, the party had split up to investigate the Lucky Monkey from the front and the back. In the module, there are 2 dinosaurs (velociraptor-like) in the woods out back, so what wound up happening was the two PCs who went around were attacked by those, while the rest of the under-manned crew had to contend with what was waiting inside... it was quite memorable and a near TPK.

DUNGEON MASTER

The room suddenly grows quiet, and all eyes are on you...

PIRG

I am a weary traveler!

DALLEN

Do you have a stable boy to tend to our horses?

DUNGEON MASTER

No one answers.

DALLEN

Does any one know the silent language of the thieves? Perhaps they are all deaf.



PIRG

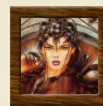
waves

DUNGEON MASTER

Everyone stands... they throw silent glances at one another...

DALLEN

You are all stablehands?



JENDY

Yes, of course, how rude of us... Please, come to the bar and sit. Rest.

PIRG

Okay!

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll Perception, everyone.

Dallen rolls: « $1d20+2 = 14 + 2 = 16$ »

Drace rolls: $1d20+1 = 7 + 1 = 8$

Pirg rolls: $1d20 + 5 \Rightarrow 5 + 5 = 10$

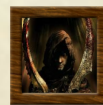
Deanna rolls: $1d20+5 \Rightarrow 6 + 5 = 11$

DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen, you notice a lot of dried blood and evidence of violence and a hasty cleanup effort.

DALLEN

You guys drank too much last night!



TERNEY

Yes... that is a bad habit of ours...

NATHER

Heh...

DALLEN

Mine too, mate!



FERISTIN

You guys must be tired. Perhaps you should set down your arms and armor. Relax.

PIRG

My arms don't come off. They are stuck on me. *pulls on arm* See?

DALLEN

Perhaps you could stop suggesting and get me a drink. ((Are they armed?))

DUNGEON MASTER

Heavily.



LENCE

A drink? Sure...

DALLEN

Are you all staff?

DUNGEON MASTER

Lence reaches down behind the bar, ducking down...



PIERTO

Yes, staff... heh...

DEANNA

Sense Motive.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll.

Deanna rolls: $1d20+5 \Rightarrow 5 + 5 = 10$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+2 \Rightarrow 10 + 2 = 12$

DUNGEON MASTER

Maybe they're staff...

DALLEN

slaps his hand on the bar Hey, what are you doing down there, brewing it?

A ferocious battle ensues! Deanna launches herself at Pierto after disarming him with heat metal. Pierto deflected a blow with his short bow, firing and retreating...

PIERTO

My love, stop this flirting! You are only a tease!

DEANNA

Coward!

PIERTO

This is how we dance, nay?



Soon all of their attackers are dead, but as Pierto goes down, he screams "Tongueater!!!" A moment later, a pack of wild baboons followed by a werewolf wielding a savage falchion burst from the back!



DRACE

Bad monkey!!!

PIRG

He's got monkey friends!

TONGUEATER

Kill them, my children!

PIRG

Daddy...?

DALLEN

Don't listen to him, Pirg.



Soon enough, the baboons and their mysterious leader are dead. Among other things, they find a mysterious *holy symbol* on the werebaboon, who transforms back into a human upon his death. The group then rushes off, hurriedly searching for the basement. Along the way, however, they stumble upon a horrifying discovery in the kitchen...



DUNGEON MASTER

In this room, you see a stack of treasure on the cutting table... Also, Sarcems severed head. His tongue has been torn out.

DALLEN

Are the wands among the treasure?

DUNGEON MASTER

No.

DRACE

Damn...

So Dallen, Seoni, Lini, Drace, Pirg, and Deanna rush down to the cellar, where they encounter more thugs...



After mopping them up, they discover Sarcem's headless corpse, as well as a female drow chained to a well in the backroom. Deanna, meanwhile, takes a moment to study the strange holy symbol...

DUNGEON MASTER

It is a triangle, and in each corner is the holy symbol of a different god from the last. The three deities are Bane, Myrkul, and Bhaal.

DEANNA

I'll roll Knowledge (Religion).

Deanna rolls: 1d20+7 => 12 + 7 = 19

DUNGEON MASTER

A name tugs at your memory... a heretical cult named *The Ebon Triad*.



The Ebon Triad

The Ebon Triad is a mystery cult that seeks to combine three gods—Bane, Myrkul, and Bhaal—into one powerful overgod. This cult is comprised of heretics from all three of the gods' followers, who can continue to draw power from their respective gods to power their spells, despite being excommunicated.

How are they able to achieve this power? No one is certain. What is known is that they have operated in the shadows for thousands of years, and their cult is tied strongly to the undead and necromancy. The name "Vecna" is associated with their mythology, too.

The Ebon Triad will feature prominently in my sequel campaign, [AGE OF WORMS](#), though their mythology will be heavily rewritten (for those of you already familiar with this classic Adventure Path).



SHENSEN

Help me!

DALLEN

Wow, it's a chained drow.



SHENSEN

Dallen?

DALLEN

That's me.

DALLEN

That's me.

SHENSEN

Please, unchain me. I am friends with Fellian and Fario.

DALLEN

((Is she hurt?))

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes, she is injured.

DEANNA

I'll roll Sense Motive.

Deanna rolls: 1d20+5 => 17 + 5 = 22

DUNGEON MASTER

You believe she speaks the truth.

DEANNA

By the powers of Torm, may your wounds heal.

Deanna rolls: « 1d8+4 = 5 + 4 = 9 »

SHENSEN

Thank you...

DALLEN

((Unlocks the chains.))

DUNGEON MASTER

She stands, rubbing her sore wrists.

SHENSEN

I must return to my mentor in Cauldron; if you escort me, I will make sure you are rewarded.

PIRG

Rewards?

SHENSEN

Fellian and Fario are in the south, investigating the weapons that were being shipped to the fire giant's army. They spoke highly of you, Dallen.

DALLEN

They were far braver than I.

SHENSEN

They believe something sinister is happening not only in Cauldron, but to the south, with the fire giant chief.

DALLEN

You know what they say about Giant-kin... How did you come to be locked up here?

SHENSEN

I was sent up here, to investigate the dealings of the Hillfolk and Alleybashers. They are two thieving guilds that were driven out of Cauldron by the Last Laugh. They formed an alliance. I was caught attempting to infiltrate their group.

DALLEN

And the monkey king?

SHENSEN

The foul creature is part of some cult.

DEANNA

The Ebon Triad.

SHENSEN

Yes! That is their name. They were working for someone in Cauldron... we mean to find out who. But I must report this immediately. Will you escort me back to the city?

PIRG

Sure.

DALLEN

Well, we need to get Sarecem's body home.

DEANNA

Yes.

SHENSEN

Thank you; this kindness will not be forgotten...



DUNGEON MASTER

And so the heroes set back for Cauldron... *until next time!*

Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.

Pirg Goblinlover has connected.

Deanna has connected.

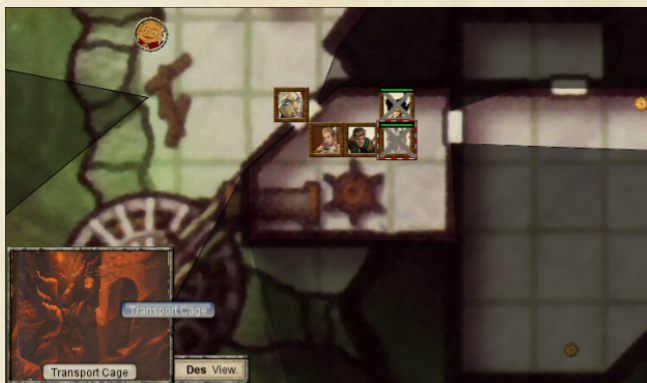
The players hurry back to Cauldron, where Jenya tells them that after communing with her god, she discovered a clue as to the whereabouts of the missing wands. She directs them to a hidden entrance on the slopes of Cauldron, leading to a long-abandoned lair of kopru, deep underground...



LINI

After the last session, I decided the group didn't need 2 NPCs tagging along, so while in Cauldron I had Lini depart, saying she felt it was time to go commune for a new animal companion.

Once inside, the group quickly overcomes two guards and then discovers a transport cage leading across a vast, still underground lake:



Dallen stays behind to operate the winch, getting the others across. Once on the other side, Drace began to operate the winch found there, bringing Dallen across. However, while doing so, the rest of the party came under attack from Hillfolk and Alleybasher scum!



Wave after wave rushed out, drawn by the thunderclap of Drace's pistol. Dallen was forced to leap out of the cage down to the sandy shore in order to join his comrades.

In the end they were victorious, striking down the halfling wizard Skaven. However, Seoni died in the battle, killed by one of the halfling's terrible spells!



But our heroes had no time to mourn her!

After running into an ambush, they chased more members of the Hillfolk and Alleybashers deeper into the ruins, eventually coming to a long hallway lined with arrowslits and guarded at the opposite end...



DALLEN

Let's lure them into the hall way and then use the necklace of fireballs!

Wary of the gauntlet, the group decided to throw up the dining hall table at their end, crouching behind it for cover, hoping the enemy would come to them. They then took aim with their ranged weapons and fired, killing one of them.

Instead of taking the bait, the group of villains instead fled to the south. Long, tense moments passed while the heroes debated on how to proceed.

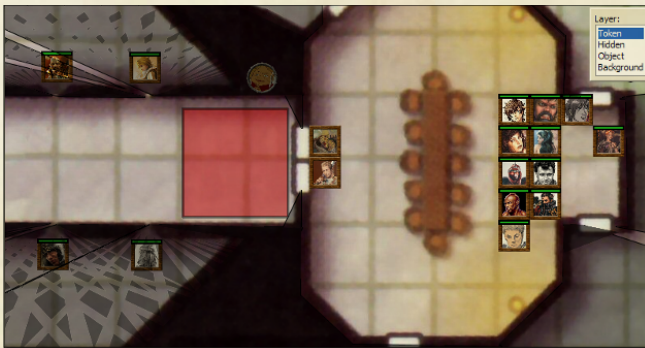
Finally, Dallen decided to down a potion of gaseous form and fly to the other end, taking the necklace of fireballs with him. The trip was slow, and when he finally reached the other side, he was surprised to find no one in the vast chamber...

DALLEN

Terrific. There are no doors leading from this room!



Meanwhile, the vanished villains suddenly appeared behind the others!!!



DRACE

Didn't know they were going to button hook us!



PIRG

Oh, dear gods!

A fierce battle ensues! On the other side of the hall, Dallen's potion wears off, and he suddenly appears, directly in front of a mud slaad!



DUNGEON MASTER

The mud slaad looks awed at your sudden transformation.

DALLEN

Where are the wands?



MUD SLAAD

What wands?

DALLEN

Of water control!



MUD SLAAD

I do not know of any wands. Do you want to see my pretties?

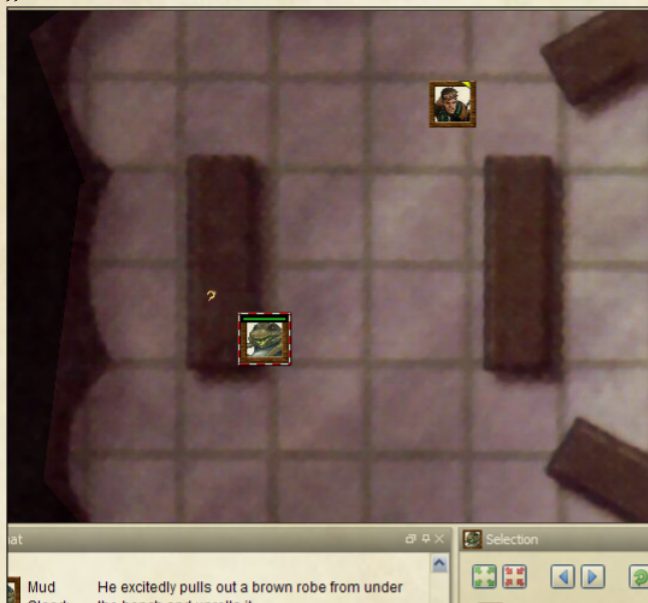
DALLEN

Oh, yes.

DUNGEON MASTER

{{purple,#book,text-align:left;background:#aa88aa55 It excitedly pulls out a brown robe from under the bench and unrolls it. You see a lot of treasure, but no wands.

}}

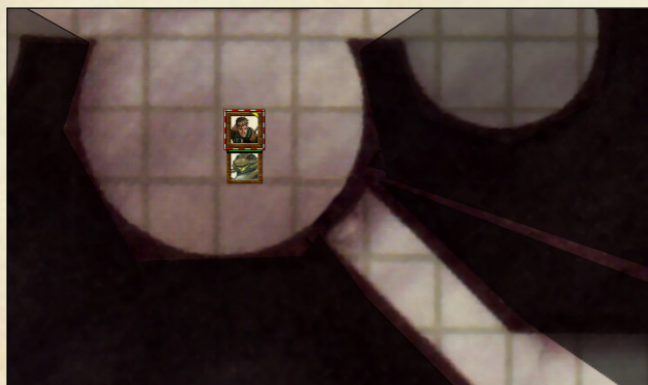


DALLEN

Nice. I may have more pretties to add to your collection. Where are the doors out of here?

MUD SLAAD

This way!



DALLEN

Thanks, pal. Here. ((Hand it my *goggles of minute seeing*.)

DUNGEON MASTER

It accepts it gratefully and hurries back to its stash.

DALLEN

(OOC) I am running.

MUD SLAAD

Master, wait!

DALLEN

((Stop.)) Yeah?

MUD SLAAD

Wear this! The spiders will not harm you! ((Hands you a brown cloak.))

DALLEN

((Take it.)) Thank you. You are a kind soul.

DUNGEON MASTER

It hurries away, afraid of that hall...

DALLEN

((Don the cloak.))

DALLEN

Dallen rushes through the darkened corridors, eventually bursting into the dining hall, just in the nick of time. Together, the heroes manage to overcome the thugs and their leader, Triel, cleric of Vecna and member of The Ebon Triad.*

During the battle with Triel, the evil cleric cast silence upon Deann's armor, ruining her spells with vocal components. It forced Deanna to move out of range of the battle, take off all her armor, before wading back in!

It was here we decided to stop for the night... until next time!



Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.

Pirg Goblinlover has connected.

Deanna has connected.

Dolgar Hammersdam has connected.



The players have just discovered the villains' base, beneath the rugged slopes of their newfound home city, Cauldron. There, they battled more members of the notorious Alleybashers and Hill Folk gangs, two thieves' guilds that were driven from Cauldron by their rivals, the Last Laugh.

After overcoming stiff resistance, the heroes managed to establish a beachhead, though Seoni was killed in the effort by the halfling sorcerer, Skaven.

The heroes also discovered a second member of the mysterious Ebon Triad—a human female cleric, Triel, whom they slew. However, they still lack a few of the precious wands of control water, which are needed to save Cauldron from flooding...



ENTER DOLGAR!

Our buddy Jon Bradley joined this session, creating a dwarf cleric. For a backstory, we said he just knew Deanna and she called for him.

Jon is a long-time gamer as well, and previously had played in my Earthdawn campaign.



PIRG

Pirg like the smell of dead bodies!

DUNGEON MASTER

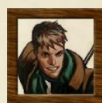
Dead bodies fill this room, as Pirg just cheerfully noted.

They start marching boldly down the hallway of snipers they had so cleverly avoided the last session. A trapdoor swings open below them, dumping Dallen & Pirg, (cutting off Deanna & Drace) down a 20-foot shaft, and leaving Dolgar the sole target!



PIRG

I okay; I land on soft thing.



DALLEN

Get off me, you oaf.

The six Alleybasher thugs quickly turn the dwarf cleric into a pincushion, but he manages to survive.

PIRG

((Can I try to use Intimidate?))

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes, but with a high DC, since they are safe behind the walls.

Pirg rolls: 1d20+9 => 14 + 9 = 23

DUNGEON MASTER

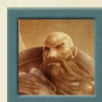
You hear mocking laughter. Dallen, go!

DALLEN

No. I take Total Defense.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay.



DOLGAR

Can I see any more traps ahead of us?

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll Perception.

Dolgar rolls: $1d20+13 \Rightarrow 11 + 13 = 24$

DUNGEON MASTER

You see that the last four squares at the other end of the hall are another trap.

PIRG

My turn. I will run and jump the trap!

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll.

Pirg rolls: $1d20+3 \Rightarrow 12 + 3 = 15$

PIRG

Fifteen feet.

DUNGEON MASTER

It's 20 feet across. Roll your Reflex save.

Pirg rolls: $1d20+3 \Rightarrow 15 + 3 = 18$



DUNGEON MASTER

Pirg lands heavily on the trap door, which swings open wide beneath him... BUT HE MANAGES TO LEAP CLEAR! Dallen, go!

DALLEN

Hey, wait up you giant fool!

Dallen rolls: $1d20+13 \Rightarrow 2 + 13 = 15$

DUNGEON MASTER

Yikes.

Dungeon Master rolls: $2d6 \Rightarrow 2$

DALLEN

I can roll Acrobatics for falling, but not for catching the ledge since I failed by 4 or more.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll!

Dallen rolls: $1d20+13 \Rightarrow 2 + 13 = 15$

DALLEN

That is just enough to ignore the first 10 feet fallen. DC 15.

DUNGEON MASTER

You land deftly on your feet, but the impact causes we'll say 1 damage since I already rolled 2d6 and got a 2.

Next, Dolgar the dwarf runs and jumps...

Dolgar rolls: $1d20+1 \Rightarrow 1 + 1 = 2$

DUNGEON MASTER

LOL

DOLGAR

lol WOW.

Dungeon Master rolls: $2d6 \Rightarrow 8$

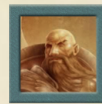
DUNGEON MASTER

8 dmg! You are not helping to break any dwarf stereotypes, here.

Eventually the group climbs out of the pit and flees out of the dreadful hallway.

DALLEN

There is a secret passage over that way.



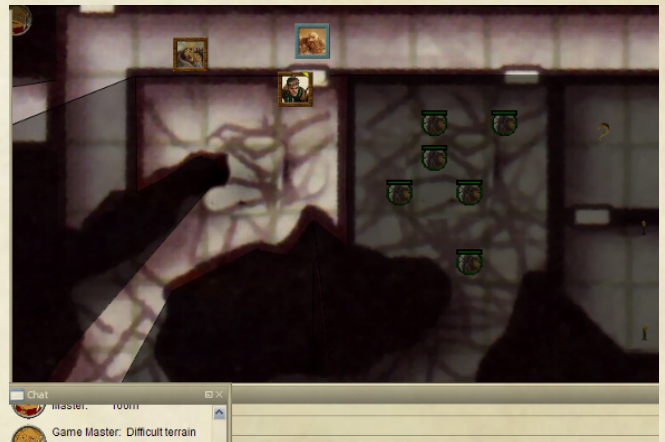
DOLGAR

You been here before?

DALLEN

Yes, but I didn't have time to explore. Met a friendly little mud slaad, though.

A moment later, the PCs come upon a spider-web-filled cavern...



DUNGEON MASTER

Spider webs fill the cavern before you. Difficult terrain.

DOLGAR

I say burn the webs.

DALLEN

I agree. They will alight.

It was right about here when both Craig/Drace and Jeremy/Deanna had to leave the session early... which proved to be too bad, given what Dallen, Dolgar, and Pirg were about to face!

DUNGEON MASTER

The webs go up in flames. In just a few minutes, the cavern is completely cleared.

PIRG

Pirg see skyfires over Waterdeep. It reminds Pirg of that time.

Unbeknownst to the PCs, the noise, light, and smoke attracts the cavern's inhabitants!



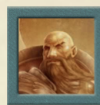
They are soon beset by a swarm of spiders led by two ettercaps, and quickly learn just how annoying an ettercap's ability-draining poison can be! In addition, Dallen soon learns the dangers of a harpoon spider, and why they carry their name!



The harpoon spider is particularly brutal, for while its poison is identical to the ettercap's, it carries an additional ability that causes anyone who attacks the creature with an unarmed or melee attack to roll a Reflex save or suffer damage from its vicious spines. Combined with a quickly deflating Dex score thanks to its poison and any tank character soon finds that attacking the creature is more trouble than its worth!

After the PCs defeat the spiders, they find another wand of control water bound in webbing, and another in a pool with a nasty blood bloater swarm (that drained Dolgar of a couple points of Strength).

However, the worst was yet to come...



DOLGAR

There's a damn army of zombies!

PIRG

PIRG HATE OGRE ZOMBIE!!!

*But Pirg would come to hate the **Spawns of Kyuss** even more! During the battle, the undead's green worms leapt to the half-ogre barbarian, eventually burrowing to his brain. After suffering several rounds of Intelligence damage, Pirg dropped dead.*



After the battle, before they have time to mourn their dead comrade, the remaining two PCs are stunned to witness Pirg shamle to his feet, green worms spilling out of his soulless eyes, mouth, and ears!



DUNGEON MASTER

7 dmg to Dolgar, and a green worm leaps onto you and does 1 dmg!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d4+1 \Rightarrow 4 + 1 = 5$

DUNGEON MASTER

5 rounds until it burrows to your brain and you wind up like poor Pirg! Dolgar, go!

DOLGAR

Rip off the worm and stomp on it!

The battle against their undead former comrade continues...

DUNGEON MASTER

10 dmg to Dolgar, and another worm leaps onto you for 1 pt. of dmg! Dallen, go!

First Dallen stabs with his Rapier « $1d20+9-2 = 20 + 9 - 2 = 27$ » and comes across with his **starknife** « $1d20+10-2 = 14 + 10 - 2 = 22$ ».

DUNGEON MASTER

hit, hit

DALLEN

That's a crit!

DUNGEON MASTER

Confirm.

Dallen rolls: $1d20+9-2 \Rightarrow 1 + 9 - 2 = 8$

DUNGEON MASTER

Nope.

The Rapier drives home for « $2d6+1 = 9 + 1 = 10$ » and the **starknife leaves its mark for** « $1d4+1d6+3 = 4 + 2 + 3 = 9$ ».

DALLEN

19 pts!

DUNGEON MASTER

Dolgar, go!

DOLGAR

Channel Energy.

Dolgar rolls: $3d6 \Rightarrow 14$

DUNGEON MASTER

Pirg crumbles to dust! The worm does another 1 point of damage to Dolgar!

DALLEN

Well, I guess we won't be healing him.

DOLGAR

Kill the damn worm!

DUNGEON MASTER

You can use a *wish* or *true resurrection* to bring him back.

The two remaining PCs decided to stop there, hoping to finish off the dungeon (and chapter) next session. Until next time!

Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Dolgar Hammersdam has connected.

Deanna has connected.



The heroes continue on their quest to recover the wands of control water and put an end to the evil in the ancient kopru ruins beneath Cauldron...





TARKILAR

Did your masters send you? I will send your heads back to the Cagewrights! No one betrays the Ebon Triad!!!

The battle is brutal, but in the end, they are victorious. They return to the surface, heading back to the temple of Torm and Jenya...

ROTATING CAST

We were missing 2 players this session—both Craig/Drace and Tim/Pirg. As the campaign goes on, we have a rotating cast of players, some even coming and going. This is due to scheduling conflicts—believe it or not, this campaign lasted YEARS (over a decade), even though we only had a few dozen total sessions.



TARKILAR



DALLEN

We lost 2 of our friends on this mission. And we found these. ((Give Jenya the emblems from The Ebon Triad.))



JENYA

What is this? Did you find out who was behind this plot?

They explained that the Alleybashers & Hill Folk, having been driven out of Cauldron by The Last Laugh, were seeking revenge. A mysterious group known as the Cagewrights had given The Last Laugh more leverage and power, allowing them to defeat these rival thieves' guilds. They teamed up with a group of The Ebon Triad—led by the undead gnoll Tarkilar—who was also seeking revenge, apparently having been betrayed by the Cagewrights. Knowing that the Cagewrights are stationed in Cauldron, they stole the wands in hopes of flooding their city.



JENYA

Our temple leader has also been slain, as you all well know; thank you for returning his body. This is a dark, dark day, indeed. Deanna, the church thanks you for your help; will you stay on with our order, here in Cauldron?

RUPHOS

We can use the extra help.

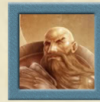


DEANNA

I will stay.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay. You get one *potion of cure moderate wounds* each session to reflect your pay.



DOLGAR

((OOC)) Instead of standing around in a church, I will be going to get something to eat at the tavern...

DALLEN

...and drink... I have many sorrows.... poor Seoni....

DOLGAR

Didn't have the chance to meet her... I usually don't drink, but I will have ONE with you...



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, so no one has anything to tell the priests. However, the town recovers the wands and the flooding is stopped. But word soon spreads... The following day, a meeting is called at the Town Hall...



DALLEN

Great. They have a Clone Army.



LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

Ladies and gentlemen, a great crisis has been averted. As many of you know, our *wands of control water* were stolen by a band of villains, and the head of the Church of Torm was murdered. In light of these tragic events, including the recent string of kidnappings and goblin vandals, we have decided additional forces are necessary...



TERSEON

Yes. We have decided to hire mercenaries (motions to the wall of heavily armed half-orcs).

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

Unfortunately, this does mean that taxes have to be raised. Effective immediately. (murmurs of discontent ripple through the crowd)

DALLEN

((DRUNK)) So the town faces yet more hardships... What, to protect your own interests? ((stands))

The Lord Mayor ignores Dallen's comments...

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

We are very fortunate to have this group of adventurers... the Stormblades, to help us quell Cauldron's troubles.

DALLEN

Yes, well, it's all very good, as long as they don't leave their fancy balls. ((Turns to the crowd.)) Look, they raise your taxes and array a group of armed warriors between you and them!

DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen, roll Diplomacy.

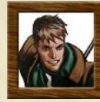
Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+7 => 6 + 7 = 13

DUNGEON MASTER

Only faint murmurs through the crowd in response to Dallen's comments.

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

Lord Vhalantru and the Lady Thifrane (motions to them), along with the parents of the Stormblades—all respected nobles in our fair city—are helping to fund the mercenaries as well, so it's not just your hard-earned money that will help pay for this unfortunate but necessary expense. The Stormblades were instrumental in saving the city from flooding...



DALLEN

((yells)) LIES!!!!!!

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

And we are most grateful to their parents for their financial and economic support...

DALLEN

((turns and points at the Lord Mayor)) All of it, lies! ((storms off))



LORD VHALANTRU

Please Dallen, don't go; speak, by all means.

But Dallen ignores the noble's plea and storms off out of the building...

DEANNA

((To the Lord Mayor)) How does the Lord Mayor tend to deal with the triad?

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

The what?

DEANNA

The Ebon Triad.

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about.

DOLGAR

((Clears his throat.)) The Ebon Triad, who we found to be behind the murder of Sarcem.

DEANNA

You mean you talk of defending us from an enemy, but you don't know their name?

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

I'm sure any threats to our city will be handled well enough by our new mercenary army and the Stormblades! (The crowd seems comforted...)

DOLGAR

((Chuckles.))

LORD VHALANTRU

Good people... The forces of good are always beset by the forces of darkness. We must stand together to ensure the safety of our glorious city. Since Surabar Spellmason defeated the demonic horde at the Demonskar so long ago, this region has been prosperous. But now it is time we paid for that prosperity. Freedom has a price. Put your trust in the Lord Mayor, as I and the other nobles do. We have seen just recently, exemplified by the Stormblades, how they—WE—have your best interests at heart.

DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen, when you get outside, you see three people waiting for you...



DALLEN

Shensen, Fario, Fellian!!! It is good to see old friends.



FARIO

Hello, Dallen.



SHENSEN

We have urgent news.

DALLEN

Well, waste no time. Perhaps you'd like to tell the Lord Mayor.

FARIO

We have reasons not to trust the Lord Mayor.

DALLEN

Is it the lying? That's what did it for me.



FELLIAN

Do you remember the forge we discovered while in the Malachite Fortress? When we saved those children?

DALLEN

Vaguely, I've been at the drink since returning to town.

FELLIAN

When you saved those slaves from creating the weapons and armor, one told us it was being created for a fire giant.

DALLEN

That I remember. Filthy giants ((grumble mumble))

FELLIAN

We investigated. The fire giant is to the southeast, in the mountains. He is creating an army.

DALLEN

To what end?

FARIO

We believe his target is the city of Redgorge.

DALLEN

That's not Cauldron.

FELLIAN

No, it isn't. Nonetheless, if that city falls, this entire region will be in jeopardy.

DALLEN

I've had about enough protecting that filthy lying mayor and his foppish entourage.

FARIO

Redgorge is very close. We need you to make haste to the keep and warn them before the fire giant can move against them. If defenses are in place, they can hold off an army.

DALLEN

((staggers slightly, but catches himself on the wall)) I think we could all do with some time away from this cesspool.

SHENSEN

Do not give up on Cauldron; something is not right with the Lord Mayor, but the people here are innocent.

Deanna and Dolgar approach...

FARIO

These are your comrades?

DALLEN

What remains.

DEANNA

What's going on? Why are you out here, Dallen?

DOLGAR

Friends of yours, Dallen?

DALLEN

Good friends.

After Dallen fills them in, the heroes agree to set off to the Keep of Adlerweg...

QUESTIONS & CLUES

- What were the Ebon Triad hired for by the Cagewrights? How did the Cagewrights betray them?
- Who are the Cagewrights?
- The two thieves' guilds that were driven out of Cauldron by The Last Laugh had joined forces with The Ebon Triad. The Ebon Triad was seeking vengeance against some mysterious group called the Cagewrights. So then, there are more powerful and sinister forces at work in Cauldron... who are they? What do they want? What is their ultimate goal...?
- Lord Vhalantru is an accomplished sculptor who has sculpted statues of many heroes who have come passing through Cauldron over the years; will the PCs ever take him up on his offer to one day make sculptors of them?
- Lord Vhalantru beat Pirg in the drinking contest—will anyone ever oust the deceptively hardy human from his top spot?
- After recovering the *wands of control water* during the annual Flood Festival, Dallen had a disturbing dream in which he stood in the long, cold shadow cast by a great flaming eye. When he awoke, he found that powers of sorcery had been awakened in him, and he took his 1st level in sorcerer (shadow bloodline).



A VIEW OF CAULDRON

THE SHACKLED CITY

ADVENTURE PATH



The Lucky Monkey



Basement



THE SHACKLED CITY

ADVENTURE PATH



Kopru Ruins

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Overlook | 15 Southern Guardroom | 29 Secret Passage | 43 Prison |
| 2 Transport Cage | 16 Workroom | 30 Webbed Cavern | 44 Interrogation Chamber |
| 3 Upper Winch | 17 Welcome Trap | 31 Ettercap Lair | 45 Unfinished Trap |
| 4 Winch Operator's Barracks | 18 Guardroom | 32 Harpoon Spider Lair | 46 Guardroom |
| 5 Storage | 19 Storeroom | 33 Trapped Chamber | 47 Entrance to Tarkilar's Caverns |
| 6 The Phantom Lake | 20 Southern Armory | 34 Storeroom | 48 Bone Guardian |
| 7 Nightmare Beach | 21 Mess Hall | 35 Northern Armory | 49 Safe Cavern |
| 8 Kopru Lair | 22 Barracks | 36 Triel's Chambers | 50 Undead Spiders |
| 9 Beach of Ruin | 23 Southern Entrance | 37 Mess Hall | 51 Glyphs of Warding |
| 10 Trapped Foyer | 24 Skaven's Parlor | 38 Meeting Room | 52 Cult Treasury |
| 11 Lower Watch | 25 Skaven's Bedchambers | 39 Thug Barracks | 53 Rubble-filled Room |
| 12 Main Entrance | 26 Workroom Storage | 40 Alleybasher Barracks | 54 Glyph Trap |
| 13 The Gauntlet | 27 Spider Nest | 41 Bloodbath | 55 Undead Minions |
| 14 Northern Guardroom | 28 Abandoned Webs | 42 Northern Entrance | 56 Tarkilar's Cavern |



1 square = 10 feet

WEST

CHAPTER 3.5: THE GAUNTLET



DUNGEON MASTER

You are heading to the mountains; Cauldron is to the northwest. You pass through the small town of Gannaway on the way to the keep. The trip takes several days. Do you guys want to buy anything at Gannaway?

The group decides it is best to do some shopping for new gear at Gannaway. When they are finished, they continue on their way...



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, so you guys come to a fork in the road. The smaller path is a rocky incline. It leads up to the side of the keep, which is up in front of you now...



SIDE QUESTS

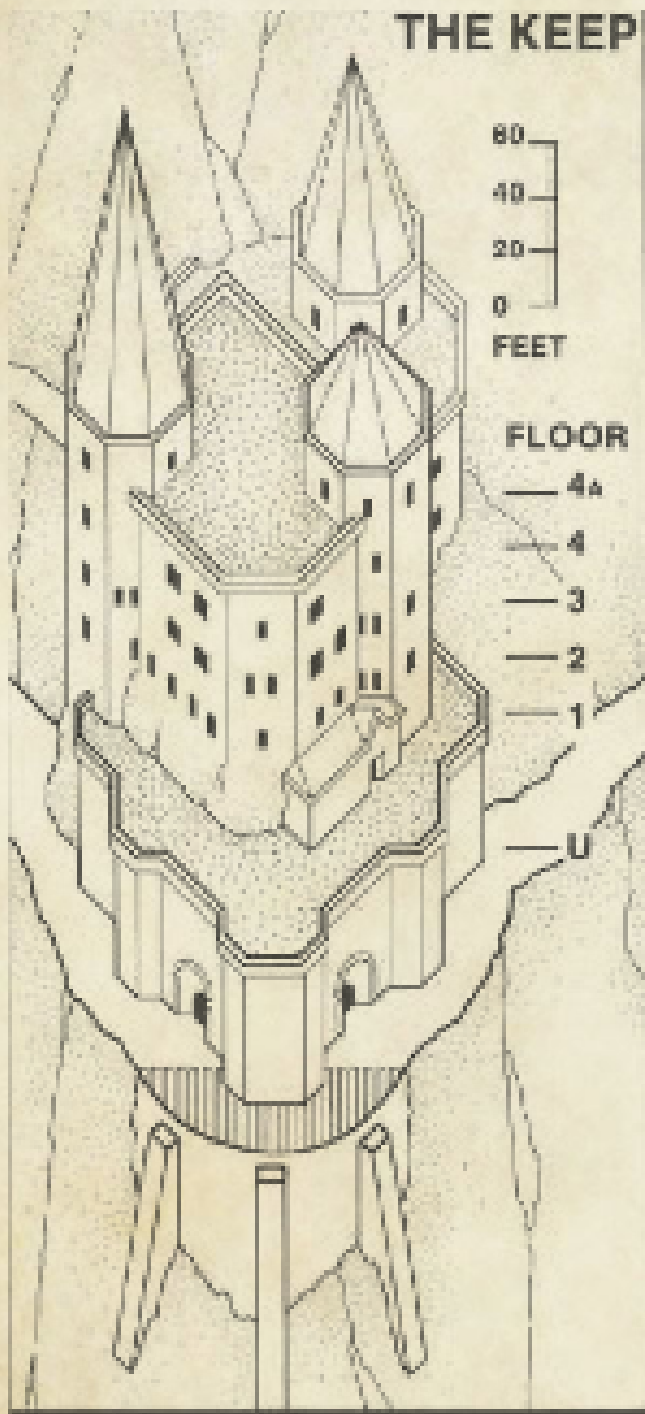
I decided to name the adventures not originally part of SCAP with decimals. THE GAUNTLET is the 2nd D&D adventure I ever ran, back in 1990. (Justin played in that one, too.)

I had to adjust the story a little to make it fit into SCAP's storyline, but I had been setting it up since Chapter 1. I just had to include it—this is one of my all-time favorite adventures.

DUNGEON MASTER

The wider, main road goes around the front of the keep, to the main gate... Choose your path!

The group decides to take the left path, leading up to the side door. After listening at the door and hearing nothing, they creak it open...



DOLGAR

Do we hear anything inside now?

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll.

Dolgar rolls: « $1d20+21 = 9 + 21 = 30$

DUNGEON MASTER

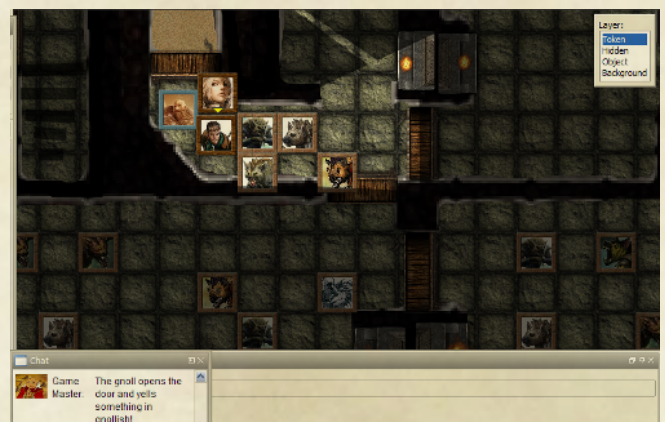
You hear something in the wall to your left! Roll initiative!



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, so you guys come to a fork in the road. The smaller path is a rocky incline. It leads up to the side of the keep, which is up in front of you now...

Too late to warn the garrison! The group discovers that the keep has already been taken over by a large band of gnolls! A furious battle ensues!





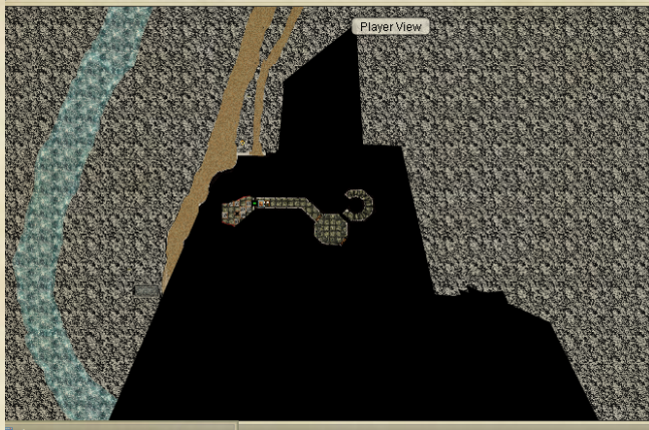
After slaughtering the gnolls, the heroes continue to search the keep, coming upon a stairwell leading up or down. Deciding down, they come upon a secret door...



Soon after, they find a chamber infested with giant ants! The drainage grate smashed, it appears as though they crawled up from the sewers...



This battle will take a while; we should stop here. Until next time!



Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.

Dolgar Hammersdam has connected.

Deanna has connected.

Krag has connected.



In last session's episode, our heroes had traveled to the Keep of Adlerweg to warn the garrison there of an impending attack from a fire giant and his army. Unfortunately, when they arrived they found that the keep had already been commandeered by a large band of gnolls. After taking care of that welcoming party, they continued on to retake the keep...

KRAG THE MANY NAMED

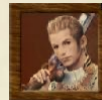
Tim returned this session! He replaced Pirg with a new character—the oh-so-humble human fighter Krag.

DUNGEON MASTER

When we last left off, you guys were about to take on a colony of giant ants and their bloated queen...



During the battle, Drace uses his slippers of spider climb to cling to the ceiling, and his gun repeatedly released its usual thunderous cry.



DRACE

The queen is dead. Long live the queen!

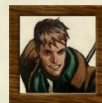


KRAG

That thing is loud.

DUNGEON MASTER

It looks like the ants forced their way up through the drainage system.



DALLEN

How deep is it?

DUNGEON MASTER

It falls into blackness, well beyond visual range.

DALLEN

Can we fit down it?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes.

DALLEN

Does anyone have any rope?

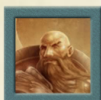
KRAG

I have rope.

DALLEN

Lower me down this hole.

Krag complies. Meanwhile, Drace, Deanna, and Dolgar head to the southern door, which leads into a large entry hall. In the four corners stand decorative suits of full-plate armor clutching longswords.



DOLGAR

I want to search this room...

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay. (Then to Dallen) Meanwhile, you descend into darkness down the rope. Thirty feet down it bends sharply to the west, sloping even further into shadow...

Then, back in the room with the armor, the suits of full-plate suddenly stir to life!

DUNGEON MASTER

Deanna, Dolgar, and Drace, roll for initiative!

DRACE

Here we go, kids! Let's do this!

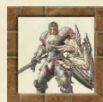
A battle begins. Dallen, with the help of Krag, scrambles back up the rope to join his comrades...



The suits of armor proved to be more dangerous than the giant ants, though no one was killed. Finally the last of their animated antagonists drops in a dented heap.

DALLEN

I wonder if there was a way to control these? They were probably part of the castle's defenses...



KRAG

Let's see what is behind one of these doors.

DUNGEON MASTER

Do you open the door?

KRAG

Yes.

DUNGEON MASTER

It leads outside; there is a steep, stony cliff, at the bottom of which lies a meandering river. At the bottom of the rocky bluff you can see the other end of the drainage pipe Dallen was just crawling down, poking out of the stony surface.

The party continues their search of Adlerweg Keep. Soon they come upon a small room with iron portcullises on either end...

DUNGEON MASTER

The portcullis closest to you is raised, but the far one is closed. Beyond it sits a thick oak door, also closed. Holes about the size of large fists cover the ceiling.



DRACE

(Still on the ceiling) Investigate one of the holes.

DUNGEON MASTER

You have to move into the room to do so...

DRACE

Sure, why not?

DUNGEON MASTER

So Drace, Dolgar, and Krag enter... anyone else?

DALLEN

I'm good right here.

DEANNA

Seems fishy.

DUNGEON MASTER

: Okay. Drace, roll your Reflex Save.

Drace rolls: $d20+6 \Rightarrow 7 + 6 = 13$

DUNGEON MASTER

The portcullis slams shut, trapping you, Krag, and Dolgar in this room! The door to the south flies open! Roll for initiative!!!

DRACE

Oh, shit...

The combatants all roll for initiative. When combat begins, the three trapped souls must roll their Ref Saves to avoid the boiling oil that comes pouring down through the murder holes in the ceiling!

DUNGEON MASTER

You can hear hyena-like laughter from somewhere above.

KRAG

Is it possible to lift the gate?

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll your Strength.

DRACE

Pirg could've done it. Poor Pirg...

Krag rolls: $1d20 + 5 \Rightarrow 15 + 5 = 20$

DUNGEON MASTER

It doesn't budge.

Dallen and Deanna, who had wisely stayed on the stairs, rush back up to find the source of the boiling oil and wind up in a fight with a bunch of gnolls!



The battle continues below, until once again it is Krag's turn...



KRAG

I will try to lift it again.

Krag rolls: $1d20+5 \Rightarrow 20 + 5 = 25$

DUNGEON MASTER

Nat 20! It lifts!!!

KRAG

Yeah!

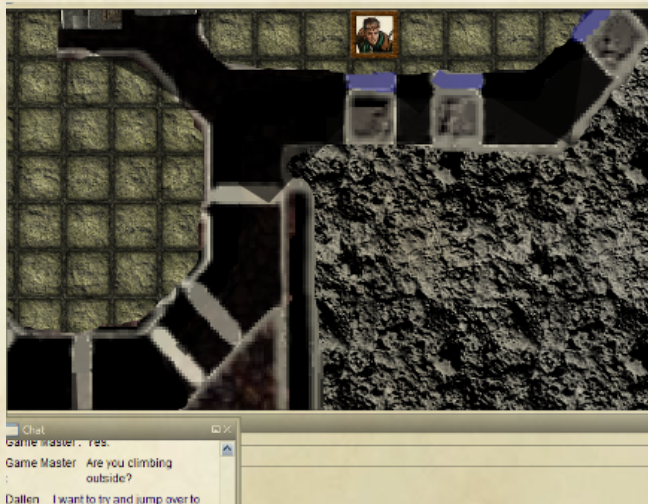
DUNGEON MASTER

The gnolls on the other side of the portcullis stumble back in horror as Krag, bellowing mightily, impossibly lifts the groaning gate upward!

The battle takes a turn for the worse for the gnolls, and our heroes are able to get out of the scalding oil pouring down from somewhere above. Meanwhile, Dallen comes up with a daring plan on how to help his buddies...

DALLEN

This is a window large enough for me to fit through, right?



DUNGEON MASTER

Yes. Are you climbing outside?

DALLEN

I want to try and jump over to the balcony below.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll Acrobatics.

DALLEN

Is there a drop?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes. 10 feet.

Dallen rolls: « $1d20+13 = 8 + 13 = 21$ »

DALLEN

DC 15. No damage.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, you land safely.

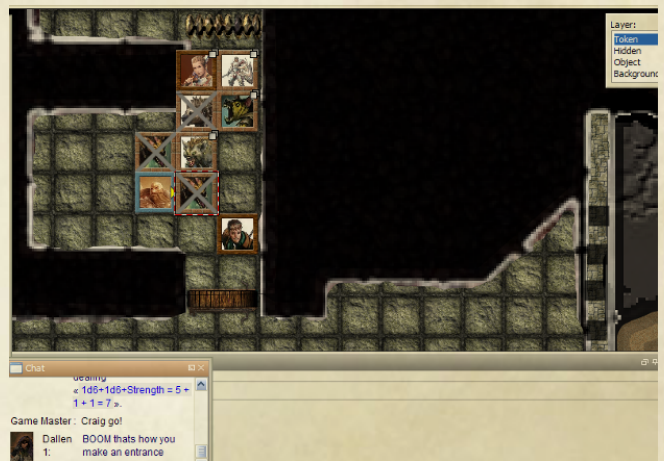
DALLEN

I rush over and kick the door in!

Dallen rolls: « $1d20+dexterity+defense+1 = 17 + 4 + 5 + 1 = 27$ » dealing « $1d6+1d6+Strength = 5 + 1 + 1 = 7$ ».

DALLEN

Boom! That's how you make an entrance!



DUNGEON MASTER

lol Okay, so picture this... Giving his best Die Hard, impression, Dallen stares grimly out of the castle window, grits his teeth, and hauls himself up. First leaning out as far as he can, his calloused fingers gripping the stone, he leaps for the balcony below! He lands deftly into a roll. Rising, his rapier and starknife leave their scabbards with twin hisses. He rushes forward, bursting through the door with a leaping kick and stabbing his rapier through the back of the nearest gnoll! The wicked blade punches through the beast's chest, and it falls with a startled yelp and dies.

The battle is over soon after. Dallen pauses to admire the view of the valley from the balcony...

DALLEN

What's the weather like?

DUNGEON MASTER

Still cloudy. The Flood Festival back in Cauldron was less than a week ago.

And so they continue on (after healing, of course), stumbling upon another large group of gnolls upstairs...



DUNGEON MASTER

The gnoll shaman yells something in gnollish! Its hyena pets move in to attack!

KRAG

He's gonna have to get outta that chair to attack.



DUNGEON MASTER

You sure about that, Krag? Dolgar, roll your Reflex save!

Dolgar rolls: « $1d20+3 = 2 + 3 = 5$ »

Dungeon Master rolls: $4d6 \Rightarrow 10$

DUNGEON MASTER

From the shaman's outstretched fingers leaps a sizzling lightning bolt! You take 10 points of damage!

KRAG



The battle, however, does not go in the gnolls' favor...

DALLEN

A subdued cone of shadowy colors slithers forth from Dallen's hand, causing creatures before him to become stunned, perhaps also blinded, and possibly knocking them unconscious. WILL SAVE ALLOWED-DC:13

The spell puts a few of the bad guys out of the fight; the battle is finished soon after.

DUNGEON MASTER

That's the first time any player I have ever had ever used that spell in one of my campaigns. Ever. Okay, so you hear a banging and yelling coming from up the hallway to the north...

DALLEN

Search the dead shaman.

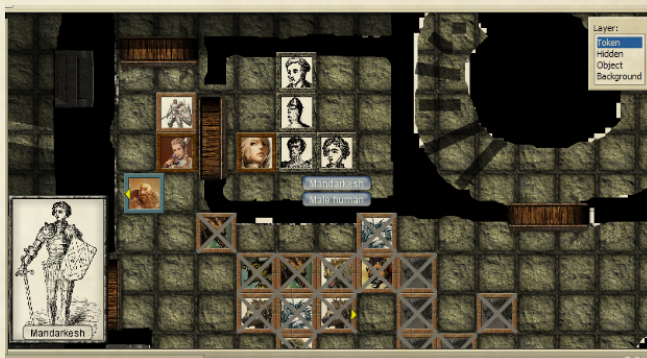
DOLGAR

Anyone need healing?

DRACE

I do.

Deanna, meanwhile, wanders north toward the sound. She finds it emanates from a bound oaken door. She opens it...



MANDARKESH

MANDARKESH

Thank the gods!

She finds four prisoners, all human males.



SIR MYKAEL

SIR MYKAEL

We heard the fighting! We trust the gnolls have been defeated?

DEANNA

Yeah.

KRAG

The gnolls have been destroyed.

DRACE

They have been... dealt with.

SIR MYKAEL

Who sent you? How many are you? Did our message get through? Did you bring the garrison from Redgorge?



DALLEN

((Leaning in the doorway.)) Friends from Cauldron, Fario and Fallen.

SIR MYKAEL

Has the fire giant arrive yet? Do we still have time?

STEPHOLD

I do not believe we are acquainted with a Fario and Fallen... from Redgorge? Militia?

SIR MYKAEL

How many of you are there? Please say you brought the garrison!

KRAG

I *am* the garrison.

DALLEN

((Rolls eyes.)) Which direction is the giant coming from?

SIR MYKAEL

We know not, but he is coming with his army! We must prepare the defenses!

KRAG

Oh, a giant? I've always wanted to kill a giant.



CAPTAIN GRAYCEN

CAPTAIN GRAYCEN

If there is no garrison, then we are in most dire trouble... The gnolls were but an advance force.

DALLEN

((tosses a *potion of giant growth* to Krag)) You're going to need this, mate.

KRAG

Thanks, friend.

CAPTAIN GRAYCEN

They sent in the ants first—just a distraction, it turns out. We killed most of the gnolls, but they overran us. We are all that is left.

SIR MYKAEL

We don't have much time! The gnolls taunted us and said the fire giant will be here soon!

STEPHOLD

We cannot stay! We need the garrison to defend the keep! The giant has a large army!

DALLEN

Where's the garrison?

MANDARKESH

In Redgorge. Days from here...

STEPHOLD

If you don't have them with you, then it is too late...

CAPTAIN GRAYCEN

Don't speak like that, Stephold. Adlerweg will not fall!

**KRAG**

Not with me here.

DOLGAR

Us.

KRAG

Yeah, *us*. Starring *me*.

DOLGAR

(chuckles)

DALLEN

Did we break the portcullises?

DUNGEON MASTER

By forcing them open? Yes.

DALLEN

((Grimaces out the window.)) What of those suits of armor? Were they part of the defenses?

DUNGEON MASTER

They *were*. Alas, destroyed as well.

KRAG

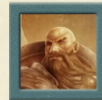
We made it easy for this army by destroying the defenses.

DALLEN

Someone has to go for the garrison... in case we don't survive.

KRAG

True.

**DOLGAR**

Who did you have in mind?

DALLEN

How 'bout one of these four go? (motion to the men-at-arms)

KRAG

Someone has to spread our glorious tale.

DALLEN

Is there an armory? What of a viewing lens? Let's move. Get the doors locked up downstairs, perhaps try and reinforce them to prevent them from being destroyed.

DOLGAR

Send one of them to get the garrison.

DALLEN

We can't send a man alone, in case of ambush.

KRAG

Send all 4. We'll defend the keep.

DUNGEON MASTER

So it sounds like everyone is in agreement to stay and help defend the castle from overwhelming forces led by the merciless fire giant?

KRAG

I'm not afraid of a giant and his army. I'm **Krag the Unbreakable!**

DOLGAR

Sure, why not? What's the worst that could happen?

DEANNA

Yeah...

DALLEN

Hmpphhh... We die here or in some dungeon. It matters not.

DUNGEON MASTER

So I'll let you guys come up with a plan of defense. And there is an armory, btw (they inform you). The room to the west from where you are now. The room contains boiling oil, a magical scrying mirror, longbows, plenty of arrows, and several longswords.

KRAG

We need to barricade the doors, but leave some unblocked.

DRACE

Murdah!

DUNGEON MASTER

Which doors do you barricade?

KRAG

Murder room, and a couple others into narrow halls where their numbers won't matter.

DOLGAR

Let's block off some of the doors with the dead gnolls. Clean this place up a little.

KRAG

Body wall!

DALLEN

We need to realize we can't defend the whole castle. Just this floor and up.

KRAG

Yes.

DOLGAR

Fill the stairwell with the dead gnolls.



DALLEN

TONIGHT WE DINE IN HELL!!!

DUNGEON MASTER

Justin, do you go up the ladder?

DALLEN

Yes.

DUNGEON MASTER

There is a closed trapdoor at the top of the ladder; it swings open into a tower. Arrow slits line the walls. The arrow slits overlook both passes; to the west, you can see the lower trail that wraps around the front of the keep. To the east, you can see the pass that leads up to the door you guys had come through. It's clear that this room is ideal for a sniper with a bow.



DEANNA

Or a gun.

DUNGEON MASTER

Yeah. All right, so we should stop here for now; the siege will be quite a battle. *Until next time!*

Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.

Dolgar Hammersdam has connected.

Krag has connected.



The party hurries to enact their battleplan before the fire giant, Skaithen, and his army arrive. They decide to barricade the doors and hold up on the third floor, where they will make their heroic stand, filling the stairwell with the many gnoll corpses...



DUNGEON MASTER

In the distance, a low, mournful war horn wails across the valley, and you can hear the low, steady thumping march of an army, urged on by the beating of war drums.

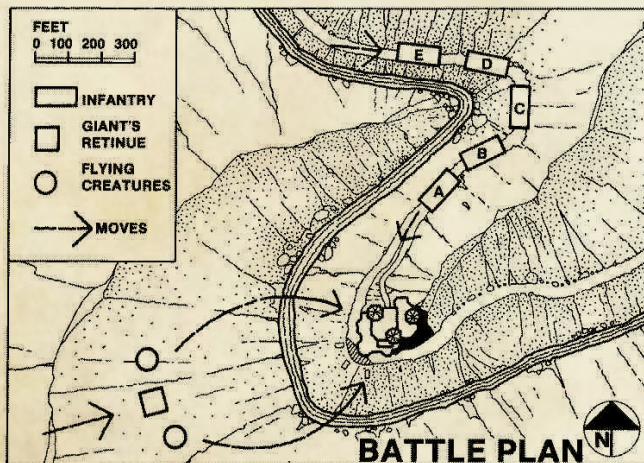


KRAG

Don't worry, gentleman. Krag the Invincible is here, battled at your side. You have nothing to fear.

DUNGEON MASTER

You hear a thunderous banging from below as the ogres reach the doors!!!

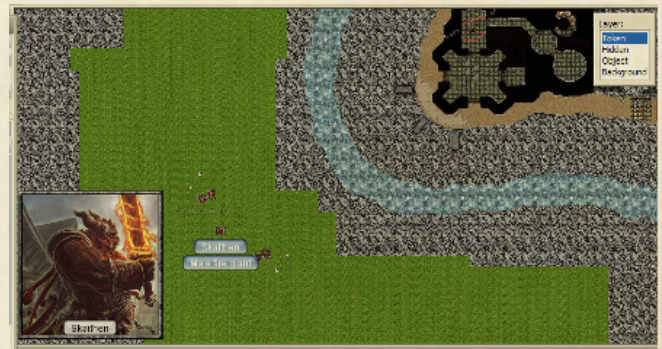
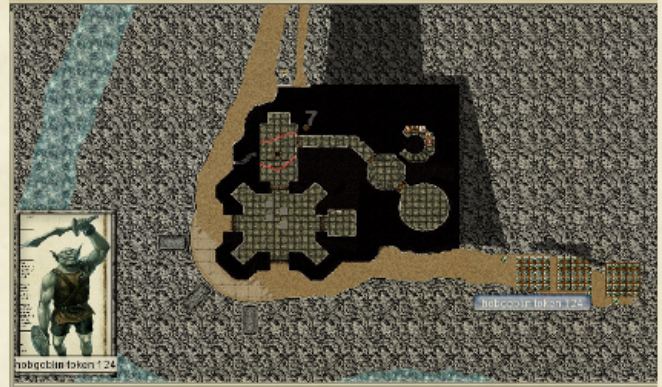


GOODBYE, DEANNA!

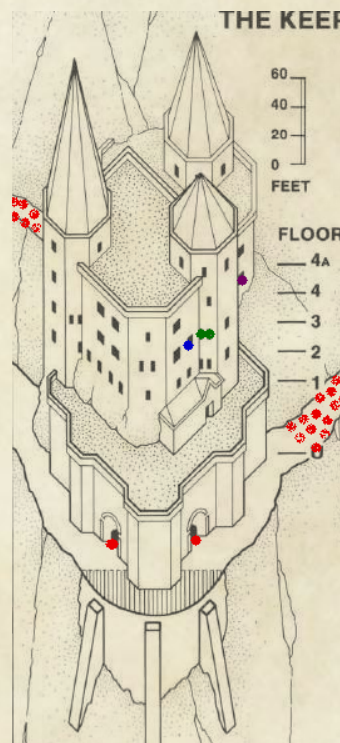
Between this session and the last, Jeremy's work schedule changed so we lost him as a player. Deanna was demoted to NPC status and sent back to the Church of Torm to work alongside Jenya.

Also, since the last session, the players somehow forgot they were discussing sending some of the men-at-arms to fetch the garrison, so they wound up sending no one... whoops...

It doesn't take long for the armies of the fire giant to march into view, attacking on three fronts!



The group watches from the third-floor windows and arrow slits, waiting for them to arrive in range. As they draw near, the four men-at-arms open fire with longbows and Dace with his pistol. Soon the battlefield looked like the following (red dots enemies, green two of the four men-at-arms, purple Dallen, blue Dace):





DALLEN

Necklace of fireballs!

DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen is in the window right above that large group coming in from the east.



DOLGAR

Yes!

DALLEN

Here's the range of the blast:



DALLEN

It's like WWII.

DOLGAR

Nice!

After rolling for damage and saving throws, many of the hobgoblins are Xed out...



DUNGEON MASTER

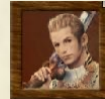
With a tremendous roar, the fireball erupts, sending screaming hobgoblins over the cliff, engulfed in flames!!!



HOBGOBLIN CHIEF

Spread out! They have magic!

Eventually Drace gets impatient and wants a new vantage point...



DRACE

Is there a different window that will allow me to shoot at the hobgoblins sooner?

DALLEN

You can always climb out the window and climb all over the side of the castle like some kind of jungle lizard with those slippers of yours.

DRACE

There's a large balcony below me?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes.

DRACE

I climb down and move to the edge of the balcony...

But seeing the reckless human firing down onto his hobgoblins from the balcony, Skaithen sends in his four manticores, which arrive a few rounds later...



Meanwhile, the doors are battered down, and hobgoblins begin pouring into the lower levels, out of range from Dallen's fireballs (of which he quickly runs out, but not before taking a terrible toll on the army), Drace's bullets, and the men-at-arms' arrows.

Soon the manticores reach Drace on the balcony, forcing him to retreat back through the window...



They follow...



Around the same time, the first of the invaders make it up the stairwell, where Krag and Dolgar await them, determined to hold the breach...



Dallen rushes over to help his comrades, leaving the windows unprotected.

The remaining two manticores take advantage of the gap and rush inside behind our heroes...



It is clear now to the team that the first phase of the battle is over; now they must do all that they can to stem the tide of enemies, who have reached the gates in force!

But Krag wants a piece of the manticores. Leaving Dolgar to hold back the ogre, he moves to aid Dallen. However, the hobgoblins easily bull rush into the room, shoving Dolgar back, creating a gap through which enemies begin to pour...

KRAG

Taste my blade!

DUNGEON MASTER

((To Dolgar)) You kill the first one that tries it with an AoO, but the second one shoves you back 5 feet!

DOLGAR

The little bastard pushed me!



To make matters worse, Skaithen sends in the rest of his flying minions—four screaming devilkins!

DUNGEON MASTER

You hear a horrific screeching coming from the room to the west!

KRAG

Banshees??

DUNGEON MASTER

Each round at the beginning of your turn, you must succeed at a DC 11 Fortitude save or you cannot take any action. In addition, if you try to cast a spell, you must first succeed at a DC 11 Spellcraft check.



SCREAMING DEVILKIN

DALLEN

Look at the chubby devilkin! lol Satan's got cupids. Watch out Drace, you might fall in love if they hit you. We should retreat to the next floor, mates.... we can't hold them back on two fronts!

DOLGAR

We need to block this door... but that ain't gonna happen.

![cat warrior](



KRAG

Fall back toward Drace!

DRACE

THIS WAY!!!

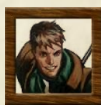
But it's easier said than done. The heroes bravely fight the hobgoblin horde, but their enemy unleashes a new tactic: surrounding their target and attempting a grapple, with each additional hobgoblin that is surrounding the target using the aid another action. After they have their foe grappled, they pin him, followed by tying him up with a rope, rendering him helpless. The screaming devilkins' horrible screeching helps by causing the PCs to miss many actions, including attempts to fight back against the grapples...

It doesn't take long before both Dolgar and Krag are wrestled to the ground (Dallen as well, but he slipped out from the under the dog pile like a wet fish). Krag is pinned, and Dolgar bound with rope.



DUNGEON MASTER

Sir Mykael goes down! A hobgoblin's wicked blade cleaves his face!!!



DALLEN

Drace, shoot that hobgoblin off of Krag!

DUNGEON MASTER

Craig, go!

DRACE

I move up the wall and get closer to shoot the grappler off of Krag.

Drace's shot is a critical hit, confirmed! The bullet tears the top left side of its skull off.



DUNGEON MASTER

Tim, you are just prone now, with a dead hobgoblin on you.

KRAG

Awesome.

DUNGEON MASTER

Dolgar, just so you know, the hobgoblins standing over you are all about to perform *coup de grace*, one after another, since you're bound and helpless!

KRAG

I want to stand up (move action).

DUNGEON MASTER

You're up, drawing Attacks of Opportunity.

KRAG

...and GREAT CLEAVE!

DUNGEON MASTER

Go! Save Dolgar!

DALLEN

((Chanting)) Krag! Krag! Krag!

After a series of rolls, Krag reduces all enemies within his reach to twitching piles on the floor!

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, that is worthy of song! So picture this... Krag and Dolgar are wrestled to the ground. Dolgar is quickly hogtied, while Krag is pinned by a burly hobgoblin who has more scars than teeth. Dallen throws a frantic look to Drace, pointing with his rapier and yelling, "Shoot that son of a bitch!" Seeing the dire situation, Drace scrambles up the wall and across the ceiling, taking aim with his pistol and firing. The bullet punches through the hobgoblin's left eye, tearing off the back left of its skull. It collapses on top of Krag. Shrugging off the dead weight, the fighter leaps to his feet with savage grin, lashing out with his steel at all foes within reach, tearing open flesh and cleaving limbs. The hobgoblins that were about to thrust their blades down upon the helpless dwarf turn to this new threat instead. Dolgar lets out a shuddering sigh of relief, working to free himself from his bonds!

KRAG

I am Krag, the Bane of Goblins!



And Dolgar does wriggle out of his bonds soon after, but the temporary victory is short lived...

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d8+2 \Rightarrow 8 + 2 = 10$



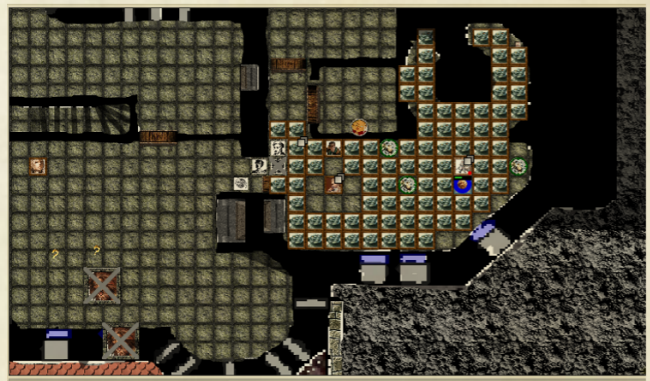
DUNGEON MASTER

Mandarkesh goes down, his throat opened by steel!



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, we should stop here. Krag just escaped his bonds but is PRONE, Krag is once again GRAPPLED, and it's MY TURN (bad guys)! Until next time!



Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.

Dolgar Hammersdam has connected.

Krag has connected.



The party began where they had last left off: In the jaws of doom!



STEPHOLD

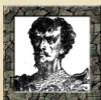
Gah!!!

DUNGEON MASTER

Not off to a good start! Stephold is disemboweled by a hobgoblin's saber!

DRACE

Ick.



DUNGEON MASTER

The screaming devilkin's wicked stinger punches through Captain Graycen's eye! The last of the men-at-arms goes down!

Drace quickly shoots the last of the screaming devilkins out of the air soon after, but they were still outnumbered at least 20 to 1. Thanks to Krag's Great Cleave feat and Dallen's wand of burning hands (and judicious applications of his Fate Points for max damage), the room soon starts to look a little more manageable...



FATE POINTS

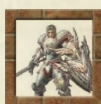
This is the first time in the campaign Fate Points are mentioned. These are a houserule. Think of them like super Inspiration Points. I'm very generous with them. I allow them to auto-confirm a crit, to deliver max damage, to immediately regain 25 hps for you or an ally, and to auto-make a save.

The reason I'm so generous with these is I don't like to pull punches, and with Fate Points I can get really clever with the tactics and still have hope the PCs will pull through.

The hobgoblins continue their tactic of group tackling the heroes to the ground, and soon Krag is bound and helpless.

DUNGEON MASTER

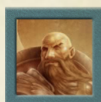
The hobgoblins above Krag decide to mock him before killing him. A couple of them whip out their tumor-looking, uncircumcised goblin manhoods and start relieving themselves on him, laughing. The green goblin urine smells strong and bitter, like burned week-old coffee.



KRAG

lol Disgusting!

It isn't long after before Dolgar is in a similar predicament. They begin tearing off his armor AND clothes!



DOLGAR

No means no!

HOBGOBLIN CHIEF 3

Let's see if the naked dwarf can fly!

DOLGAR

Game over, man! Game over!

DUNGEON MASTER

The hobgoblins toss you out of the window, Jon!



KRAG

Brutal.



DALLEN

Cast *feather fall* on him! Wait, hold on... Sorry bud. You are out of range. 25 ft. + 5 ft. per level, cast at 3rd level, so only 40 feet.

DUNGEON MASTER

Dang.

DRACE

Fate Point to extend range..?

DUNGEON MASTER

Hm... I'll allow an extension of 10 feet per Fate Point.

DALLEN

That's all I need is one.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay.

DALLEN

Arcane Spell Failure caused by Mithral Armor. 10>«
1d100 = 56 »

DOLGAR

I will spend the Fate Point, if I can.

DUNGEON MASTER

Sure, go ahead.

DOLGAR

Okay, done.

DUNGEON MASTER

Dolgar floats, completely bound and NAKED, gently down 60 feet to the road below.

SKAITHEN

((Growling)) Go make sure the dwarf is dead.

OGRE 1

As you command, my lord.



The ogre stalks off down the stairs in pursuit of our naked dwarf friend while Skaithen and his hell hound pets throw themselves into the battle!

Not to be long out of the action, Krag managed to once again escape his bonds and lay waste to his tormentors...

KRAG

Yeah! You green-skinned wusses can't hold me down!

Meanwhile outside, naked Dolgar frantically fought to escape his bonds before the arrival of the ogre!

DUNGEON MASTER

You are free! Dolgar is free finally!

DOLGAR

Can I heal myself also?

DUNGEON MASTER

No, that was a Standard Action.

DOLGAR

Ok, I will just have to hide for now under some bodies and start healing myself next round.



Meanwhile, back in the death pit...

SKAITHEN

You have cost me an army... Prepare to die.



DUNGEON MASTER

Krag, what do you do?

KRAG

Stand up, and drink that *potion of giant growth*!



SKAITHEN

Impressive... most impressive...

KRAG

Oh, yeah! You're not so big now, are ya, you flaming bitch!

DALLEN

((Snickers.))

KRAG

((To Skaithen)) Come closer. I wanna see your face when you die!

DUNGEON MASTER

Skaithen grins cruelly and steps in, heaving his great two-handed sword in a deadly arc... POWER ATTACK!!!

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+18 => 20 + 18 = 38

DUNGEON MASTER

Natural 20! Confirming critical hit...

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+18 => 16 + 18 = 34

KRAG

Oh, shit...

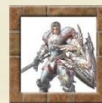
Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+13 => 1 + 13 = 14

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+8 => 16 + 8 = 24

Dungeon Master rolls: 9d6+72 => 36 + 72 = 108

DUNGEON MASTER

You take 108 points of damage!



KRAG

F@^k my a**!

DRACE

Umm...

KRAG

-58 hps.

DUNGEON MASTER

Anyone have any Fate Points left?

KRAG

I have two...

DUNGEON MASTER

Three will do. That will heal 75 hps.

DOLGAR

I have 6.

DUNGEON MASTER

He only needs 1 more.

KRAG

He turned me into jelly, lol.

DOLGAR

Ok, I will give him one.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, so you only take 33 damage, Krag.

KRAG

Okay.

DOLGAR

(Still hiding) Are there any weapons and/or armor on the bodies I can use?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes, swords, 1d8 dmg.

DOLGAR

Where is that ogre?

DUNGEON MASTER

You're not sure. When you can see him on the map that means you can see him.



DOLGAR

I will keep hiding under the bodies, with the sword in my grasp...

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, my turn... POWER ATTACK!!!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+20 \Rightarrow 20 + 20 = 40$

DUNGEON MASTER

Another crit!!! Confirming!

KRAG

omg, not again...

DOLGAR

F@\$k!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+20 \Rightarrow 8 + 20 = 28$

DUNGEON MASTER

CONFIRMED.

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+15 \Rightarrow 11 + 15 = 26$

KRAG

I still haven't hit him, lol.

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+10 \Rightarrow 13 + 10 = 23$

Dungeon Master rolls: $12d6+96 \Rightarrow 44 + 96 = 140$

DUNGEON MASTER

140 damage!!!

KRAG

I'm jelly again, lol. To be fair, I have been critting a lot today, too.

DOLGAR

So, how many Fate Points this time?

KRAG

I'm at -123.

DUNGEON MASTER

You need 5.

DOLGAR

To get to +2 hps.

Dolgar steps in and saves the day by spending the remainder of his Fate Points to save Krag. However, missing all the action makes the naked dwarf impatient...

DOLGAR

Do I see anything yet?

DUNGEON MASTER

Not yet!

DOLGAR

To hell with it, then. I am going to start running for the door...

So the naked dwarf, armed with his charred purloined sword, goes bounding off back toward the keep and comes face to face with the ogre!



OGRE

Here, piggy, piggy, piggy...

Meanwhile, back upstairs...

DUNGEON MASTER

Krag, what kind of sword are you holding?

KRAG

Bastard.

DUNGEON MASTER

lol

KRAG

I wasn't calling names! That's what I have, lol.

DUNGEON MASTER

OH, hahahaha. Non magic? What's your CMD?

KRAG

23.

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+19 \Rightarrow 12 + 19 = 31$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+14 \Rightarrow 19 + 14 = 33$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20+9 \Rightarrow 14 + 9 = 23$

DUNGEON MASTER

Is your sword non magical?

KRAG

Yes. Masterwork.

Dungeon Master rolls: $9d6+92 \Rightarrow 34 + 92 = 126$

DUNGEON MASTER

Skaithen *sunders* your sword! It shatters like brittle iron!

SKAITHEN

Hehehe...



DALLEN

Mercy...

DUNGEON MASTER

Krag, go!

KRAG

I wanna grapple the giant.

DUNGEON MASTER

lol Be my guest.

DALLEN

Oh, yeah. This is going Greco-Roman!

Krag rolls: $1d20+10 \Rightarrow 20 + 10 = 30$

DALLEN

Hooray!

KRAG

I still haven't hit him, lol.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, you've grappled him!

KRAG

Now I want to kiss him.

DUNGEON MASTER

LOL The two titans lock in an epic struggle!!!



Meanwhile, down below, Dolgar bravely fought the ogre, though without a shield or armor, the fight quickly turned against him...

DOLGAR

Prick. I hate ogres.

DUNGEON MASTER

Speaking of which, yours is flailing madly about like a dead slug.

DOLGAR

lol



DUNGEON MASTER

Roll your CMB, Krag!

Krag rolls: $1d20+11 \Rightarrow 19 + 11 = 30$

DALLEN

YEAH!

DOLGAR

Nice.

DALLEN

Fuck you, giant!

DUNGEON MASTER

Krag is still winning the wrestling match! But he has yet to pin him.

KRAG

I was all state in college. Fighter college.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, we should stop here. My turn. Krag has the upper hand on Skaithen, the naked dwarf is outside being pummeled by the ogre, and there are 4 remaining Fate Points with the group (though you get more at the start of next session). And Dallen killed all of the hell hounds!

DALLEN

Dallen, Slayer of Hell Hounds!



DUNGEON MASTER

Until next time!

Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.

Dolgar Hammersdam has connected.

Krag has connected.

The heroes began this session exactly where they had began last session: In the jaws of doom!!! Struggling to maintain control of the fire giant, Skaithen, Krag soon loses his grip, and their fierce enemy struggled to his feet, and after a failed disarm attempt by Dallen, our heroes began to rethink their situation...



KRAG

Krag the Everliving is known by many titles. I think I should add Krag the Strategic Retreater to that list....

DUNGEON MASTER

lol

Meanwhile, outside, our naked dwarf friend continued to get pummeled by the ogre, suffering punishing damage round after round. However, he soon gets a critical hit (confirmed) with his first attack, and hits again with his second...

DUNGEON MASTER

Epic! Just like Rocky! After the ogre smacks you around for several rounds, you finally sever his Achilles tendon, and when it drops to its knee, you drive your blade down through its clavicle into its black heart!

The rest of the heroes decide it's a good time to retreat!



SKAITHEN

Don't let them escape! Kill them!

But our heroes do escape. Battered and beaten, the heroes make it back to Redgorge a few days later...



Though Dolgar somewhere along the way got some clothes, he still mourned the loss of all of his armor, weapons, and gear..

DOLGAR

I lost four wands... two were full charges...

KRAG

I lost my sword and shield, both destroyed by the giant, shattered, like a wench's jaw. And some hobgoblin is probably using my helmet as a toilet by now.

DALLEN

I lost my heart at Wounded Knee.

DUNGEON MASTER

lol

DOLGAR

LOL



DALLEN

And everyone, I found a scroll on the floor while escaping Adlerweg... it must have fallen off the giant while he was wrestling with Krag. It's written in giant, though, so I can't read it.

DUNGEON MASTER

You will have to find someone in town who can translate it for you. You see that Redgorge is a very dilapidated town. Many of the homes are empty, and in many places the wall surrounding the town is in disrepair, crumbling and useless.

Soon a group of armed soldiers approach, and our heroes tell their harrowing tale...

KRAG

I will explain that due to my great leadership skills we were able to perform a temporary retreat while we roused a force to fight back.

DUNGEON MASTER

After explaining what happened, they take you to the mayor. She explains that Redgorge troops have been busy fighting the various orc tribes in the southern jungles.

DALLEN

Are the orcs organized?



MAYOR SIND NEBERN

No, they are not. There are many different tribes, but they have all been very aggressive as of late.

DALLEN

Is this where the reinforcements are located?

MAYOR SIND NEBERN

Yes, but we only have just over 100 in strength. We can't afford more... Recently, the economy of Redgorge has been undermined due to new policies set by the Lord Mayor of Cauldron.

KRAG

They don't have any giants with them, right?

MAYOR SIND NEBERN

The orcs? No. No giants. Just a lot of orcs. If they did unite, this region would be in a lot of trouble. But fortunately, there hasn't been any one leader strong enough to gather a bunch of goblins together.....

DALLEN

Cauldron's new policy? And what policy might that be?

MAYOR SIND NEBERN

Taxes and tariffs, mostly. They cut deals with merchants who used to come to Redgorge. And they tax anyone heading to Redgorge passing through their region, so it's better to just stop in Cauldron.

DALLEN

What's the importance of destroying your economy?

MAYOR SIND NEBERN

We know not... Cauldron and Redgorge used to be sister cities, both created by Surabar Spellmason after he defeated the Lord of the Demonskar and his demonic host.

DALLEN

Yeah, well, from what I know of the nobility of Cauldron, it doesn't surprise me they would be willing to destroy your city for their own gain.

MAYOR SIND NEBERN

Indeed...

DALLEN

We need to deal with that fire giant. We can't do it alone.

MAYOR SIND NEBERN

You are willing to return with us once our garrison arrives?

DALLEN

Yes, he must be stopped. He may be the leader who could unite the orc tribes, and it would only be a matter of time before he swept through the region.

KRAG

Not on my watch!

MAYOR SIND NEBERN

Very well. Thank you for your support.

DUNGEON MASTER

It takes three more days for their garrison to return; in the meantime, you can rest and get that scroll translated.

They get the scroll translated:

Skaithen,

My mercenaries are now in place in Cauldron, despite a minor setback caused by some troublesome adventurers. It is time for you to strike at Redgorge and destroy our enemies there. Our mutual employer has asked me to remind you that your services will not be forgotten. Once our goals have been met, the Cagewrights will help you reclaim you and your brother's place in Kongen-Thulnir. But first, you must take the keep of Adlerweg. Once the human-held pass is conquered, there will be nothing between you and Redgorge.

—The Blue Duke

DOLGAR

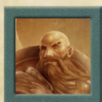
Well.

KRAG

He's gonna come to us.

DALLEN

We have to put an end to that damn fire giant. But not without an army...

**DOLGAR**

This town has to prepare for a pretty tough fight now.

DUNGEON MASTER

The mayor seems distraught.

MAYOR SIND NEBERN

Who is the Blue Duke? What does Cauldron have to do with this?

DALLEN

Well, they are evil liars and cheats.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, so time passes, and after three days, the garrison returns, undermanned and bloodied.

DOLGAR

How many?

**KRAG**

You fellas need a bath.

DUNGEON MASTER

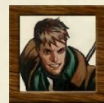
About 65 soldiers. They explain that there the orcs suddenly retreated into the jungle. Their scouts report that apparently the strongest tribe, the Black Fang, called a moot—a gathering of all the tribes. And there was rumor of a fire giant walking amongst them.

DOLGAR

Great.

MAYOR SIND NEBERN

It doesn't sound like you need to go to Adlerweg with us after all...perhaps he abandoned it already. Please, return to Cauldron and discover what you can and keep in touch with us. But be careful.

**DALLEN**

Well... Dolgar, maybe your stuff is in Adlerweg still.

KRAG

The goblins would have taken all his stuff.

DOLGAR

Do you think we have the time for that? It's gone...

DALLEN

Drink my *potion of clairdoyance/clairvoyance* and see if his gear is still there.

**DUNGEON MASTER**

It's not, and neither are the goblins. Abandoned... All of the bodies are gone, too.

KRAG

I need to get a weapon if we are gonna kill some orcs.

DALLEN

((Dallen drinks the potion and his eyes cloud over.))
Your gear is gone, my friend.

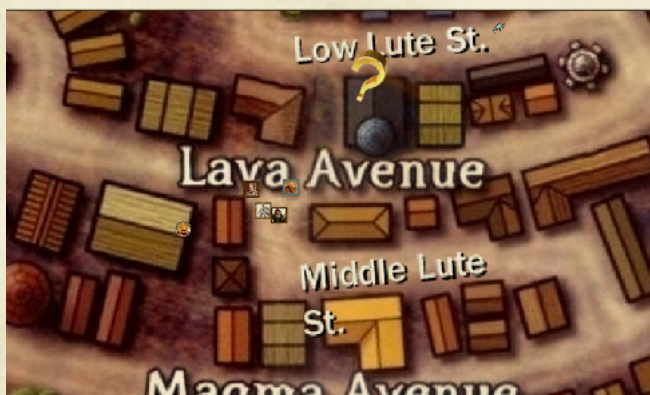
DOLGAR

As I thought... (sobs)

DUNGEON MASTER

The mayor explains that they will take what little gold they have and search for mercenaries of their own and also try to enlist more men.

After saying their goodbyes, the heroes head back to Cauldron...

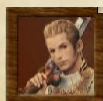


DUNGEON MASTER

It takes 3 days to get to Cauldron from Redgorge. When you return, it doesn't take long before you learn that the Stormblades have sort of shaken things up since you've been gone. They have collapsed the dungeons you guys had discovered to prevent any access to the Underdark. And they arrested Keyghan Ghelve and Orak Stonehaven. Their trial is today. Do you wish to go?

DALLEN

YES.



DRACE

Law & Order: Cauldron.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay. You are allowed into court as witnesses (even though this all happened before Krag and Dolgar joined the party).

The judges are Jenya, her childhood friend Alek Tercival (a paladin who recently returned to Cauldron from adventures), the Lord Mayor, and Lord Vhalantru. The trial is being held in the courthouse, which is located at the city's garrison in the northwest section of the city.



DUNGEON MASTER

Pressing the charges of conspiracy are the Stormblades. You listen to the Stormblades explain how Keyghan made keys for skulks, who then kidnapped many townsfolk, including children, some of whom are still missing, and how Orak conspired with a vampiric bugbear who allowed goblins to terrorize the streets. They demand the death penalty. Keyghan and Orak seem terrified.

DALLEN

That's insane!

JENYA

Does anyone have anything to say in their defense?

DALLEN

YES! ((Did we have time to get our fancy clothes from the Flood Festival?))

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes, just barely. Add +2 to any Diplomacy roll.



ALEK TERCIVAL

The bench recongizes Dallen Yadwrick of...?

FOPPISH DALLEN

THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!!!

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

Outrage, you say?

DRACE

He did say outrage.

DALLEN

It doesn't matter where I'm from, but that I'm here now. (Then to the Lord Mayor): Yeah!



TODD VANDERBOREN

The real outrage is that YOU let these men go!

FOPPISH DALLEN

These two men were victims just like everyone else in the atrocities that occurred around them!

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

Pah.

FOPPISH DALLEN

SHUT YOUR GOBLIN-COCK LOVING MOUTH!
((POINTS))

DUNGEON MASTER

gasps ripple through the crowd!

KRAG

((laughs))



LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

You cannot speak to the nobility of Cauldron that way!
One more outburst and you will be removed!

FOPPISH DALLEN

I've had all I can take of these fanciful whims of the nobility of this city!

LORD VHALANTRU

Please, Lord Mayor, let him continue. Perhaps he speaks the truth.

ALEK TERCIVAL

Yes, let him speak.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Victims, both Keygan and Orak! Orak even more so.



JENYA

Please elaborate, Dallen.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Orak was under the persuasion of a vampire's charms; he didn't even remember it.

ORAK STONEHAVEN

It's true! I have been a faithful citizen for many years!

FOPPISH DALLEN

And Keygan was coerced into his actions.



KEYGAN GHELVE

Yes! It's all true!

FOPPISH DALLEN

To whom were they to turn? The Stormblades??
((motions))

KEYGAN GHELVE

They were going to kill my familiar, my Starbrow... and then, when they *points to Stormblades* arrested me, I tried to explain, and they killed him! They killed my familiar!!!

TODD VANDERBOREN

Ladies and Gentlemen of the bench... THIS (points to Dallen) man is a pirate!!! He bears the mark of Sasserine! He is condemned!

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

A pirate??

FOPPISH DALLEN

Criminals? If the court saw fit to remove Keygan as a locksmith and keymaker that seems fair. But death...

TODD VANDERBOREN

Show them! Show them your mark, "sir!"

DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen, roll Diplomacy, adding the bonus from clothes and subtracting the penalty from the tattoo.

FOPPISH DALLEN

I've nothing to hide. ((pulls his shirt open)). I've been punished for my crimes, by the laws of Sasserine, and lived. Far more heinous were my acts than either Orak or Keygan, and yet I live.

TODD VANDERBOREN

For now...

Foppish Dallen rolls: « 1d20+8 = 4 + 8 = 12 »

FOPPISH DALLEN

+2, so 14.

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

A pirate! A pirate! Guards, arrest him!

Captain Terseon Skellerang, Skylar Krewis, and several half-orc mercenaries begin moving in...

FOPPISH DALLEN

Not today!



ALEK TERCIVAL

HOLD! You will not arrest this man. He has already been punished by the laws of Sasserine.

FOPPISH DALLEN

As I said.

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

I am the Lord Mayor, and I—

ALEK TERCIVAL

YOU will cease your wagging tongue. I have had enough of your blustering.

FOPPISH DALLEN

((smiles))

JENYA

My magic has indeed confirmed Dallen's testimony. Keyghan and Orak were not operating under their own free will.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay Dallen, roll once more to see if you can sway Lord Vhalantru.

Foppish Dallen rolls: « 1d20+8 = 7 + 8 = 15 »

FOPPISH DALLEN

17.



LORD VHALANTRU

I see no need to spill more blood. The horrific events of the past months are over.

KRAG

((starts a slow clap))

DUNGEON MASTER

lol

LORD VHALANTRU

We have our friends the Stormblades, and also these gentlemen to thank... Sirs, do you have a name for your group?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Thank you, sir. ((to Tercival))

ALEK TERCIVAL

((nods))

KRAG

Our name is "Krag and the Gang".

DUNGEON MASTER

lol So no name, though?

FOPPISH DALLEN

No, we have not yet formalized any organization. We have just recently come together to help this town and area.

ALEK TERCIVAL

You have our many thanks. This trial is adjourned.

KEYGAN GHELVE

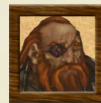
sob sob

FOPPISH DALLEN

Sorry, Keygan.

KEYGAN GHELVE

Starbrow was innocent...



ORAK STONEHAVEN

Thank you, Dallen!

KRAG

Way to go, Dallen. I would have helped but you had it well in hand. I was once called **Krag the Truthseeker** after I solved the mystery of the missing watchman in my home town. Turns out he was under the bridge the whole time shaving his feet. Odd fellow.

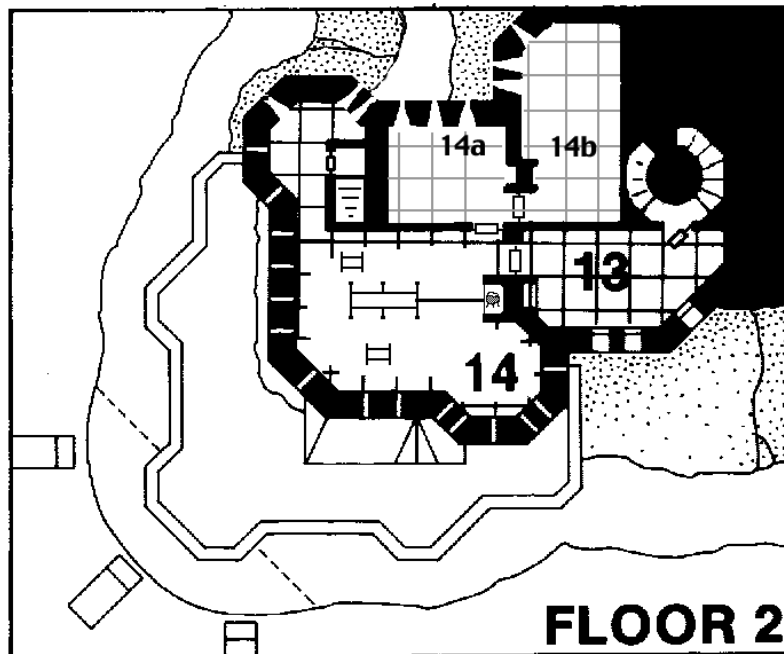
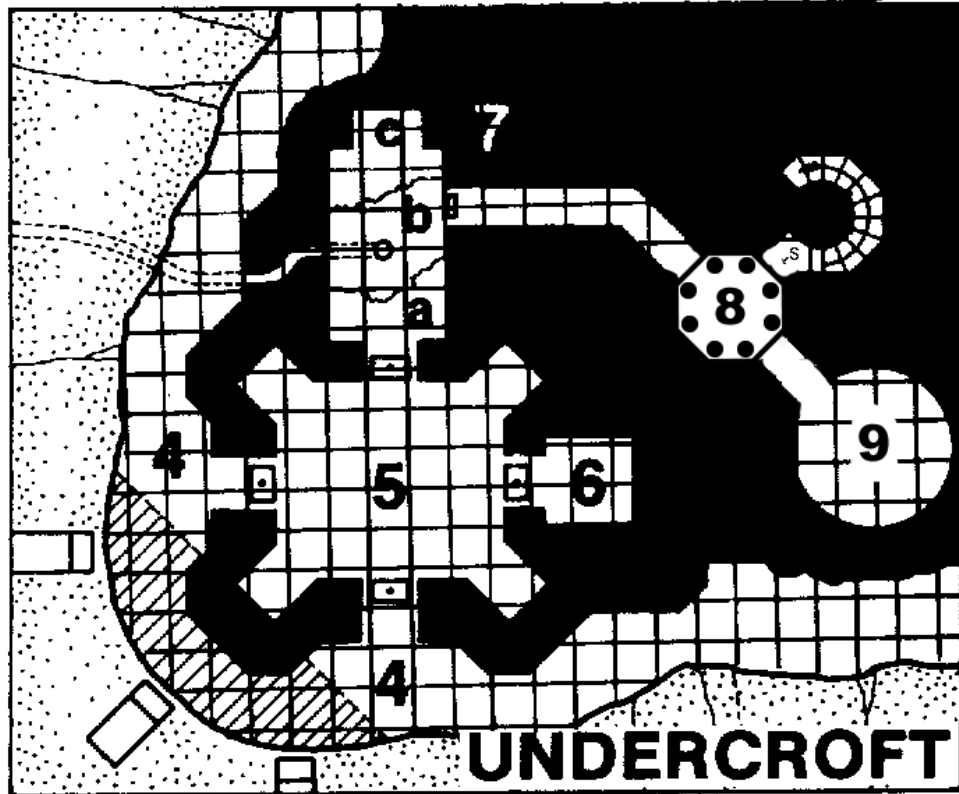
FOPPISH DALLEN

Who calls you all these names...

KRAG

My personal friend, Lord of Greyskull Harbor. My hometown.

With the trial concluded, the players leave the courthouse.



CHAPTER FOUR: THE ZENITH TRAJECTORY



DUNGEON MASTER

After the trial, you learn that Alek Tercival has recently returned to Cauldron while away on his adventures battling evil. He has returned at the behest of Jenya, who told him about the situation Cauldron is in. Alek tells you that he is going to publically challenge Terseon Skellerang to a duel. According to ancient custom of Cauldron, nobles can challenge one another to duels for a right to take their position. Since both Terseon and Alek trace their bloodlines back to the earliest founding nobility of Cauldron, Terseon must accept his challenge. Once he defeats Terseon, Alek explains, he will banish the half-orc mercenaries, who, by all accounts, bully the citizens more than protect and seem more like the personal protectors of the many, many tax collectors who are out in force every day.

DRACE

You have my support, sir.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, so after that is all settled, we have some downtime. About a week and a half, in fact. What do you guys do?

Most of the PCs use the downtime to simply relax and buy a little bit of equipment. Dallen, however, has many tasks to do:

DALLEN

First order of business is to meet with the wealthy merchant, Maavu, and offer him a deal that we will offer him discounts on guarding his caravan and offering protection if he helps fund the construction of a keep.

DUNGEON MASTER

Maavu will allow you to take out a loan if you make a Diplomacy roll. The DC will determine the interest rate. Based on your level, you can take out up to 33,000 gp: DC 15=30%, DC 20=25%, DC 30=20% (Dallen agrees, and rolls a 29. I allow a 12% interest.)

DALLEN

Find the real estate and start construction on Stronghold.

DUNGEON MASTER

You find some available land here:



DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen's player, Justin, will be responsible for making the map of their stronghold in MapTools. Justin calculates what he wants to build, and according to the Stronghold Builder's Guide (a 3.5 supplement), it will take 3 weeks for it to be finished. You must make a minimum payment to Maavu equal to 12% of the loan amount (so 3,960 gold pieces) 30 days hence (from Mirtul 9th).

DALLEN

Find a scribe and purchase flyers for finding Lini.

DUNGEON MASTER

You gain a +1 roll to Diplomacy for attempts at tracking her down for every 100gps you spend on flyers, for a max of +5. (Dallen's roll is over 30.) Answer: You learn that Lini was last seen looking for a new animal companion. You know that she was led to the jungles to the southwest of Cauldron at the advice of Lord Vhalantru.

DALLEN

Stake out Lord Vhalantru for a couple of days.

DUNGEON MASTER

Lord Vhalantru spends most of his time in his estate. The only regulars are the Lady Thifrane, the Lord Mayor, and the woman you recognized to be Jil of the Last Laugh, the one from the Demonskar Ball.

DALLEN

Find out if Orak Stonehaven keeps records of his costumers.

DUNGEON MASTER

He does not, but he of course agrees to help you in whatever way whenever he can.

DALLEN

Try to secretly find where the Last Laugh is based out of; try to locate Jil about town.

DUNGEON MASTER

In the week and a half you have, you have no luck finding the Last Laugh. You sometimes see Jil entering Lord Vhalantru's estate, but you have yet to see her leave.

DALLEN

Go see Keygan. I need locks made (included already in the price of the stronghold) and see if anyone else has come out of Jzaridune.

DUNGEON MASTER

No one else came out of Jzaridune (to his knowledge) before the Stormblades came and caved in the entrance. He of course agrees to make your locks—for free.

DALLEN

Arrange a dinner party with the Stormblades at our new stronghold, so that both our parties can discuss the tribulations affecting cauldron.

DUNGEON MASTER

They respectfully decline your invitation.

A week and a half goes by... The group finds themselves in the northern section of Cauldron, while Dallen chats with Maavu about business...

DALLEN

Look, Maavu is played by Kurt Russel.



DUNGEON MASTER

Everyone roll Perception!

Suddenly, an umber hulk appears in the middle of the street, as if from thin air!!!

KRAG

I call dibs on the claw meat!



Everyone is called to roll Perception once again...

DUNGEON MASTER

Dolgar, you see a woman toss a lit torch onto Maavu's shop and then run away!



DALLEN

I want to cast *create ice* were it lands!



DOLGAR

Let everyone know and chase her!

DALLEN

Arcane Spell Failure caused by Mithral Armor. $10 > \llbracket 1d100 = 59 \rrbracket$

DUNGEON MASTER

: Okay. When you run around the corner, she is nowhere in sight...

DOLGAR

Shit...

DUNGEON MASTER

People are everywhere, trying to get a good look at the umber hulk corpse without getting too close.

DALLEN

I succeeded at my arcane spell failure roll.



DUNGEON MASTER

Nice. Okay, the torch doesn't light the roof, it just slides off the ice and lands on the cobbled street below, shedding sparks.

DALLEN

That's coming out of my loan.

DUNGEON MASTER

Everyone roll Perception again!

Dolgar rolls: $\llbracket 1d20+18 = 19 + 18 = 37 \rrbracket$

Krag rolls: $1d20+1 \Rightarrow 8 + 1 = 9$

Drace rolls: $d20 \Rightarrow 8$

Dallen rolls: $\llbracket 1d20+2 = 15 + 2 = 17 \rrbracket$

DOLGAR

Dolgar, the All Seeing!

DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen and Dolgar, you see a gold coin on the ground where the woman was.

DOLGAR

Pick it up.



MAAVU

(To Dallen) Thank you!

DALLEN

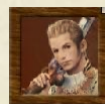
No problem, Maavu. We are in business together. Have to protect my interests as well.

KRAG

(Referring to the coin) She left a tip!

DOLGAR

Examine it.



DRACE

That's our loot for the encounter!

DALLEN

That could have spells cast on it. Cast *detect magic*.

DUNGEON MASTER

No magic detected. It looks like a Cauldron coin, but instead of the Lord Mayor's face, it is the face of a rogue painted like a jester.

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d100 \Rightarrow 83$

DUNGEON MASTER

Drace, attack Krag, full attack.

DRACE

Three shots?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yep.

DOLGAR

Shitty... what have I done? ((Looks at the coin in his hand))

Dolgar, and the other players, don't realize that both Dolgar and Drace have been confused by the umber hulk...

Drace rolls: $d20+12 \Rightarrow 5 + 12 = 17$

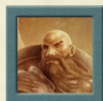
Drace rolls: $d20+12 \Rightarrow 16 + 12 = 28$

Drace rolls: $d20+5 \Rightarrow 18 + 5 = 23$



KRAG

AC 25.



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, roll for damage.

KRAG

(To Drace) You son of a bitch.

DALLEN

He's ensorcelled.

DRACE

9 dmg.

KRAG

I'm gonna kill you gunslinger! Nobody shoots **Krag** the Unshootable!

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d100 \Rightarrow 82$

DUNGEON MASTER

Drace, attack Krag again! Full attack!

DRACE

Can't! Have to reload.

DUNGEON MASTER

Charge him and attack with your gun! 1d4 damage plus Strength modifier!

Drace rolls: $d20+10 \Rightarrow 16 + 10 = 26$

DUNGEON MASTER

Hit!



KRAG

Can I attack with the flat of my blade? Non-lethal dmg?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes.

DOLGAR

Where is the magic coming from?

DUNGEON MASTER

You can't tell.

Krag begins to knock Drace around with the flat of his blade, until suddenly, Dolgar attacks Maavu!

MAAVU

What the?!

DOLGAR

I can't control it, sorry!!!

DALLEN

((To Maavu)) He is charmed, Maavu! ((OOC)) I cast color spray at Drace! Arcane Spell Failure caused by Mithral Armor. $10 > \ll 1d100 = 43 \gg$ A subdued cone of shadowy colors slithers forth from Dallen's hand, causing creatures before him to become stunned, perhaps also blinded, and possibly knocking them unconscious. WILL SAVE ALLOWED—DC:13

Drace rolls: $d20+1 \Rightarrow 7 + 1 = 8$

DALLEN

You are stunned for 1 round, and you drop your gun.

But just then, a large group of half-orc mercenaries round the corner and see Dolgar attacking Maavu! Simultaneously, a group of gnome wizards, members of the MTA (Magical Threats Agency) arrive and see Drace battling Dallen and Krag!



HALF-ORC MERCENARY

((Pointing to Dolgar)) Arrest that dwarf!!!

KRAG

I don't like the look of those gnomes!



Dungeon Master rolls: 1d100 => 51
Dungeon Master rolls: 1d8+5 => 1 + 5 = 6

DUNGEON MASTER

Drace Arlica suddenly punches himself in the face for 6 damage!

KRAG

Haha.

DRACE

Suddenly... pfff.

DOLGAR

lol

The gnomes then mistake Drace as one of the enemy!



MTA GNOME 1

Arrest that human!

DUNGEON MASTER

The three gnomes cast *magic missiles* at Drace for 25 damage!!!

DRACE

That will take me down.

DUNGEON MASTER

Drace drops.

DALLEN

((To the gnomes)) Who are you?

MTA GNOME 1

MTA! Stand aside!

KRAG

What's MTA?!

MTA GNOME 1

Magical Threat Agency!

KRAG

Never trust a gnome, Dallen! Never trust them. Beady little eyes....

Meanwhile, the half-orcs begin attacking Dolgar... to kill. Krag rushes over to try and take him down without hurting him...



KRAG

I want to grapple the dwarf.

Krag rolls: 1d20+11 => 10 + 11 = 21

DUNGEON MASTER

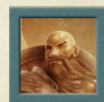
You grapple him! The half-orcs then seize him.

HALF-ORC MERCENARY 1

We'll take it from here, human.

KRAG

A witch did this! No need to arrest him; he wasn't himself.



DOLGAR

I was not myself!!! I am innocent.

DUNGEON MASTER

They ignore you both and arrest both Dolgar and Drace.

DALLEN

They weren't themselves? Wow, we are going to wear out that defense.

DOLGAR

Leave me alone, you orc dogs!

DUNGEON MASTER

Dolgar, one of them slaps you in the face!

DOLGAR

(Spit in his face.)



DALLEN

((puts a hand on Krag's shoulder)) Don't do it, Krag. We can't do anything if we all go to jail.

KRAG

Damn half-orcs.... ((grumbles something pro-human))

DUNGEON MASTER

While grappled by the others, one of the half-orcs attacks Dolgar!

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+7 => 1 + 7 = 8

DUNGEON MASTER

But misses.

HALF-ORC MERCENARY 4

Let's gut this dwarf pig!

DOLGAR

Just try it!



MAAVU

Hey! That will be enough of that! Do you know who I am??

HALF-ORC MERCENARY 1

Grrr...We are still arresting them.

DALLEN

Thanks, Maavu.

DUNGEON MASTER

They begin hauling Drace and Dolgar away.

DALLEN

Follow to make sure they get to the garrison, and that they aren't hurt.

KRAG

(To Maavu) Thanks, Snake Plisken.

DUNGEON MASTER

They are taken to the garrison. Terseon Skellerang seems delighted.

DALLEN

Oh, it's good to see you too, Terseon.

DUNGEON MASTER

After all of the witnesses come forward, they have no choice but to let them go.

DALLEN

Better luck next time, Terseon.



TERSEON SKELLERANG

((Grumble))

DUNGEON MASTER

Soon after, you all receive an invitation to the Cusp of Sunrise.

DALLEN

What's the Cusp of Sunrise.

DUNGEON MASTER

It's a prestigious club here in Cauldron. Only the rich get in. Apparently a woman named Celeste wants to thank you personally for all of your heroic efforts.

KRAG

A club you say? Well I am important and I should be invited.

DOLGAR

I could use a drink.

DUNGEON MASTER

It's right here on the map:



The heroes accept the invitation, and after a full-night's rest, they arrive at the Cusp of Sunrise, dressed in their best outfits...



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, you guys arrive at the Cusp of Sunrise.

DRACE

Fancy clothed.



RENJIN

Who are you?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Guests. Of Celeste.

DRACE

And friends of Cauldron.

KRAG

Krag the Glorious. Personal friend of the Lord of Greyskull Harbor. Killer of goblankind, grappler of giants.

RENJIN

Ah... Yes. Most impressive. Yes, well, so you are the umber hulk people. Very well, you may enter. Celeste is expecting you.

DOLGAR

Anyone know Celeste?

DUNGEON MASTER

No one answers you. There's an air of snobbery.

FOPPISH DALLEN

...and of scum and villainy.

DRACE

Yeah, that's us...



DOLGAR

I see Maavu... ((walks over)) Sorry about yesterday, Maavu.

MAAVU

No worries; I'm so glad you guys could make it.

KRAG

Barkeep, I need a drink!



LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

((To Dallen)) Well, hello again.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Oh, it is good to see a friendly face ((bow and kiss her hand))

DUNGEON MASTER

She smiles.

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

I hope my cousin, Todd, isn't being too troubling. If you are ever in Sasserine, you must look me up. You can teach me how to use that...sword of yours.

KRAG

(Flash Dallen a thumbs up.)

FOPPISH DALLEN

So it's no longer a secret I'm a brigand and pirate? I can never return to Sasserine..... It's really a shame now....

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

I'll see what I can do about that. My brother and I are due to return soon. My parents have just purchased their new ship and want to show it to us.

FOPPISH DALLEN

that would be much appreciated. ((bow deeply)) Please, let me buy you a drink, milady.



DRACE

Fancy clothed.



TOLIN KEINTAI

((Wanders over, throwing Dallen a suspicious and jealous look)) Is this person bothering you, my lady?

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

Go away, Tolin. I'm enjoying a conversation.

Tolin sulks back to his group.

FOPPISH DALLEN

How much longer will you be in town?

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

Just until tomorrow. But you'll know where to find me... I'm easy to look up in Sasserine.

FOPPISH DALLEN

That is a shame. I fear the town of cauldron has lost so much, I hope it survives the loss of such beauty.

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

((Smiles.))



CELESTE

((To Dolgar and Krag, who wandered over to her finally)) Where are the rest of you?

celeste



DOLGAR

And you are, milady...?

CELESTE

I am Celeste.

FOPPISH DALLEN

(To Lavinia) If you will excuse me...

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN

Of course (winks).

CELESTE

I wanted to thank you personally for all of your sacrifice.

DOLGAR

I am Dolgar, nice to meet you.

KRAG

Thank you. I am Krag the Heartbreaker ((bow)).

FOPPISH DALLEN

Don't be modest, Krag. I believe you have a lot more titles than just that.

KRAG

In the interest of saving time, I will keep it short, Dallen.

CELESTE

I also wanted to introduce you to my friend here (motions to the dwarf sitting next to her), Davked Splintershield.

**DAVKED**

cough cough cough Well met... wheeze

DOLGAR

(nod respectfully)

FOPPISH DALLEN

(To Davked) I thought dwarves were resilient to disease?

KRAG

((grimaces suspiciously at the dwarf)) Is it from lack of sun? I know how you dwarves like your holes.

DAVKED

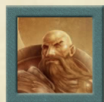
I am suffering from a curse... A wasting disease that will not go away unless I make amends with my three sons. I have done so with 2, but the third is still missing... But that is why I hoped to meet you.

FOPPISH DALLEN

That is unfortunate... well at least he must still be alive

DAVKED

Yes, quite true. Through divination magic, I have learned where my son is located. But he is being held prisoner in the Underdark, for my son is Zenith Splintershield.

**DOLGAR**

Honorable name.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Hm... The only access I know of to the Underdark has been blocked by those cowheaded morons across the room ((looks over at the Stormblades)).

KRAG

((looks across the room, staring at Drace))

DRACE

wandering the room, fancy dressed

FOPPISH DALLEN

We will do all we can, but we are in a bit of a spot ourselves...

DRACE

bows to the ladies

**JESSA**

((To Drace)) Well hello, stranger... flirts

DRACE

I assure you, I am not strange. ;)

FOPPISH DALLEN

((Lean closer to Celeste and Davked)) We could use someone with your positions, we are trying to find out information on the Blue Duke.

CELESTE

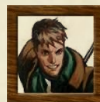
I'm sorry, I don't know anything about a Blue Duke... But we do know about another entrance into the Underdark.

KRAG

Oh? Where would this be?

CELESTE

We know of a man who lives perhaps a day away from here who knows of an entrance. His name is Jared. He knows the location of an entrance to a place in the Underdark called Bhal-Hamatung. This is where you will find Zenith. Davked will pay you each 4,000 gold pieces if you bring his son back alive.

**FOPPISH DALLEN**

The city needs heroes like Zenith. And Alec Tercival.

KRAG

...and Krag.

DUNGEON MASTER

Celeste gives you directions to Jared's hut.

DAVKED

That man's just a crazy old wizard...

DOLGAR

Should be fun, then.

The heroes then spend some time relaxing and enjoying the Cusp of Sunrise. Drace even decides to play a gambling game called Snatch the Gem...



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, so Snatch the Gem is played like this: Drace, you will roll dice for yourself, and the rest of you will be playing the part of NPCs, each rolling his own dice. Drace, you can bet up to 1,000 gold pieces. If you win, your winnings will be multiplied by a roll on a 1d20. If you lose, the opposite.

DRACE

I bet 500 gp.



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, so the game is simple. Each of you will roll a 1d4. When you roll a 1, then the next round you roll a 1d6. Once you roll another 1, you roll a 1d8, and so on, until you roll a 1 on a 1d12. At that point, you are the winner. You then roll a 1d20. If it's you, Craig (Drace), then you get what you bet times what you roll on the 1d20. If you lose, then you must pay what someone else rolls times what you bet. Understood? And... go!

Drace's player, Craig, rolls against the other three players and manages to pull off a win. He rolls a 6 and wins 3,000 gp!!!

Meanwhile, Dallen had wandered over to another noble, Baron Tranth...



FOPPISH DALLEN

Good day to you, Sir. I am Dallen Yadwrick, Condemned Pirate of Sasserine.



BARON TRANTH

I am Baron Tranth, Baron of Bloodstone Village far, far to the northeast of here. I am looking for a group of brave heroes. Or cheap mercenaries.

THE BLOODSTONE WARS

Maybe some of you old schoolers recognize with Baron Tranth I'm setting up the Bloodstone Wars! It's definitely a campaign I intend to run someday...

FOPPISH DALLEN

Well, I must advise you to stay away from those thugs across the room ((looks at the Stormblades)). Heroes they are not.

BARON TRANTH

Hm... I will heed that advice. Celeste speaks highly of you, however. I am returning soon. When I arrive back home, I will assess the needs of our village. I have no doubt that the situation has not improved since I began my search.

FOPPISH DALLEN

We have recently accepted a request from them to find Zenith Splintershield...

BARON TRANTH

I see. Well, we are being extorted by a band of brigands.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Humans?

BARON TRANTH

Some... but mostly goblins. Orcs, ogres, and the like. And giants. Villains, the lot of them.

FOPPISH DALLEN

There seems to be a lot of giants these days. Beware of a Fire Giant named Skaithen—he is a monstrous threat!

BARON TRANTH

I beware of all giants, my friend!

FOPPISH DALLEN

Well spoken. And never make a deal with a dragon.

NEVER MAKE A DEAL WITH A DRAGON

Any of you chummers SHADOWRUN fans? Justin ran 2nd Edition back in high school. It's actually why I got into EARTHDAWN when it first came out. Both of those games – particularly 2nd & 1st Edition, respectively – are still high on my nostalgia list.

I actually had a chance to pitch SHADOWRUN to the execs at Tornante—the outfit who owns the film & TV rights—back in July of 2021. I was pitching it at as an anime at the time, and wound up pitching it to both their live-action TV group and their animation group. NEITHER group knew the property at all. They had to take a “Shadowrun” crash course before each pitch meeting, which meant digging up years-old pitches from other writers.

None of them were interested in Shadowrun. They all wanted to focus on the time period when magic was just returning to the world. No metahumans, no cyberpunk themes or tech, no monsters, no futuristic geopolitics. I said, “You know, I could write it this way... but then it wouldn't really be Shadowrun, would it?”

I had more success with Earthdawn. The year following my unsuccessful pitch with Tornante, I helped producer Lloyd Levin (producer of films such as DIE HARD, PREDATOR, THE ROCKETEER, EVENT HORIZON, and many others) secure the rights from FASA.

BARON TRANTH

But if you are willing, then when I return home, which won't be for some time, I will send for you.

FOPPISH DALLEN

If we are able, hopefully we can help.

BARON TRANTH

Thank you. I will send for you. What shall I call you? Does your group have a name?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Well, perhaps this is a time we decide on a name, guys.

Dallen proposes the Chultan Exploration Society, and the others agree. They come up with this symbol:



The heroes head out to Crazy Jared's hut the following day, following a map given to them by Celeste. The trip is around 40 miles and takes them a day and a half to arrive. When they do, they stumble upon this scene:



DUNGEON MASTER

The dragon is about the size of a large horse.

The heroes rush into action, but between the dragon's flyby attack, its breath weapon, and the fence (which impedes their movements), most can do nothing but wait around, hoping it comes close enough to attack it. Dallen puts a combo of *Expeditious Retreat* and his sorcerer power, *Lash of Shadows*, from his shadow bloodline to good use, the former granting him enough speed to always stay in range to use the latter...



KRAG

Get back here, dragon!

The dragon finally lands, unleashing a full attack against Drace, dealing 29 points of damage!



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, the turn order goes like this: Dallen, Dolgar, Drace, Krag, dragon. It's the top of round 2/3 for the dragon's fire breath weapon. We should stop here. *Until next time!*



Server started.

Drace Arlica connected.

Dolgar Hammersdam connected.

In our last session, our heroes were battling the young adult red dragon Gotrrod, who was attacking Crazy Jared, the strange hermit wizard who knows the location of the entrance to the Underdark. It doesn't take much longer before Drace the Gunslinger fells the terrible beast with three quick shots to the skull!



MISSING PLAYERS

Justin/Dallen was missing this session (the first and only session he missed this entire campaign), and we had to say goodbye to Tim/Krag, who got a schedule conflict and could no longer join. But worry not—Tim will be making a return later on this campaign!

DUNGEON MASTER

Jared walks over and plants his foot on top of its corpse, as if he had just slain the beast. He looks quite pleased with himself.

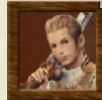


CRAZY JARED

So, mighty warriors, you have come to protect your king, have you? I shall knight thee! Kneel!

DOLGAR

Huh?



DRACE

Hmmm... well...

CRAZY JARED

You are now both knights of Andoria! Of course, you cannot stay here. Find your own castle.

DRACE

(humor him... kneels)

CRAZY JARED

taps you on both shoulders with a crooked stick he scoops up You shall be known as Knight of the Loud Booming Thing! While I shall be known as Slayer of Dragons. And you! *points to Dolgar*

DRACE

You shall be known??

CRAZY JARED

((To Dolgar)) You shall be known as Short Bearded Man.



DOLGAR

Ahh...

CRAZY JARED

Well, I am known by many names. King Jared the First is my most well known. Also, greatest wizard there ever was. *looks at the red dragon corpse* I wonder how you cook red dragon...

DRACE

You were almost King Jared the LAST... until we showed up.

CRAZY JARED

You there! Short Bearded Man! I hereby promote you to royal cook! Make me some dragon steak! ((Then in response to Drace's comment)) Nonsense! The beast could not withstand my powers.

Pause as Crazy Jared fixes them with a blank, unblinking stare. Then:

CRAZY JARED

So, loyal subjects, what brings you to my castle?

DOLGAR

We are looking for the entrance to the Underdark. We heard you might know where one is.

CRAZY JARED

Yes, yes I do. Why would you want to go to such a dreadful place?

DOLGAR

We are looking for a dwarf. We heard he is in the Underdark.

CRAZY JARED

Ah! A noble quest! Very well, I will help you. *snaps his fingers*

DUNGEON MASTER

You suddenly find yourself before a yawning chasm... a great wound in the earth...

DOLGAR

What the...

On the way down the chasm, a cryo-hydra emerges and attacks!



KATE PFEILSCHIEFTER

The battle is a close one, but in the end, the hydra is no match for Drace's bullets...

DRACE

*spins his barrel and casually reloads I had 8 hps left...
pew...*

After healing, they continue down into the deep scar in the earth...

DUNGEON MASTER

At the bottom, a yawning cavern stretches deep, deep into darkness... The cavern stretches on for at least a mile, dipping farther and farther into the humid Underdark.

After some time, the PCs finally come across a temple...



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, so this handout is what the temple looks like. You guys are standing at the base of the stairs that lead up to the "fish's" mouth.

As they cautiously approach, 4 kuo toa appear in the fish's eyes, crossbows in hand!



The heroes rush inside, but the kuo toa hurry down to cut them off..



After the battle, they head to the temple's prison, where they find two prisoners: a male human named White-Eyes and a male halfling named Cherrit...



WHITE-EYES

Thank the gods!

CHERRIT

Who is it? What's going on?

CHERRIT



WHITE-EYES

Don't listen to him! He is one of them!

CHERRIT

No, don't listen to HIM! He is one of them!

DOLGAR

Who are you?

DRACE

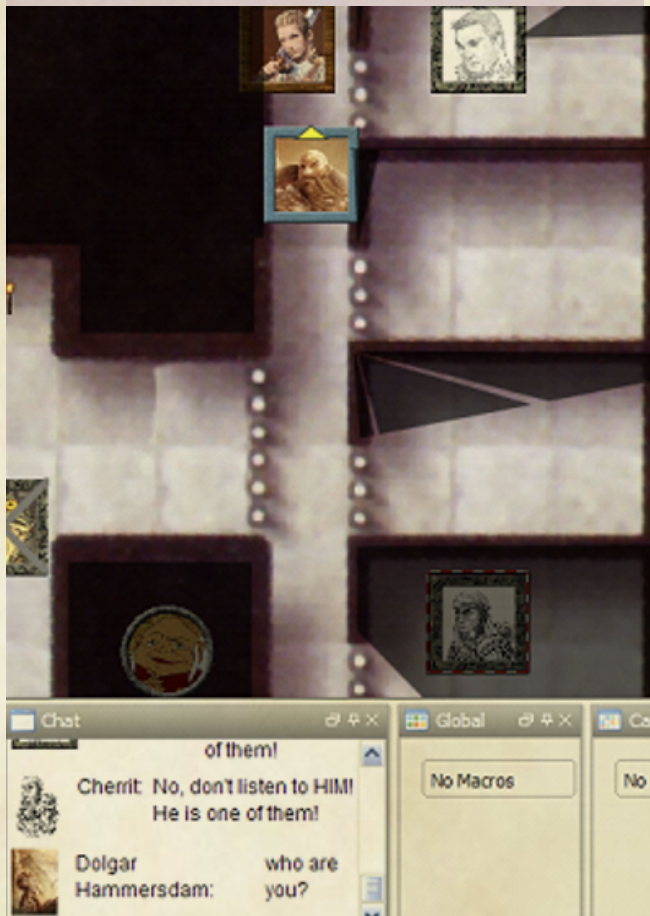
One of who? What is going on here?

WHITE-EYES

My name is White-Eyes. I was kidnapped by the kuo-toa. They kidnap travelers and use them in their horrific sacrificial rituals!

DOLGAR

From where?

**WHITE-EYES**

From the surface world near here. They come out at night looking for victims.

CHERRIT

He lies! He works for them! They kidnapped me!

**DRACE**

(OOC) Where is the other voice coming from?

DUNGEON MASTER

To the south.

WHITE-EYES

No, that fiend works for them! They kidnapped me!

CHERRIT

He is a liar!

WHITE-EYES

Let me out of here; I can help you defeat the kuo-toa!

DOLGAR

We don't have time for your bickering!!!

DRACE

Why would kuo-toa imprison one of their own agents?
To trick would-be saviors?

WHITE-EYES

He is but a slave! He colludes with them so they won't sacrifice him!

CHERRIT

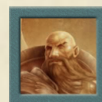
No, he is the captive who colludes with those frog people!

DOLGAR

Do you know of Splintershield?

WHITE-EYES

Splintershield? You seek a treasure? A shield?

**DOLGAR**

Obviously not, then...

WHITE-EYES

No, wait! I can help you find it! Just release me!

DOLGAR

You, do you know of Zenith?

CHERRIT

Zenith? What is that? Magic? I can help you find it! You are only two; with me, you'll be three!

DOLGAR

You can't help, either. Good day, then...

CHERRIT

No, wait!

WHITE-EYES

You can't just leave us here to die!

DOLGAR

Why?

WHITE-EYES

Have mercy!

DOLGAR

Can't trust either of you.

DRACE

And if we were to let either of you go?

CHERRIT

I promise, I will help you!

WHITE-EYES

No, I promise I will help you!

DRACE

You are of no use to us...

WHITE-EYES

I can fight!



CHERRIT

I can fight!

DRACE

Tell us of Zenith Splintershield or we will have to leave you to your fates.

CHERRIT

Who is Zenith Splintershield?

WHITE-EYES

Who is that?

DRACE

A dwarf.

WHITE-EYES

Hm... the Frog People worship a dwarf!

CHERRIT

Yes, yes, a dwarf is their leader... evil dwarf...

DOLGAR

Worship a dwarf, huh?

DRACE

Oh? This just got interesting.

DOLGAR

What is his name?

CHERRIT

I know not his name!

WHITE-EYES

I have never spoken with him. They only speak in their frog tongue!

The debate goes on for some time, with White-Eyes and Cherrit each promising they can help while condemning the other. Soon, Jon, the player of Dolgar, had to leave due to prior engagements, leaving Craig (Drace) to finish the session by himself. He eventually decided that three people are better than one and releases them both, but keeps them in the lead so he can keep an eye on them. Soon they enter a room partially submerged underwater, and while crossing, a mummy rises from its depths to attack!



DUNGEON MASTER

The mummy ignores them and heads for you!

DRACE

WHAT?!

Drace manages to down the undead, but not without suffering some significant damage himself. After the battle, the trio heads farther into the temple, eventually discovering a secret door at the end of a long, silent hall...

DUNGEON MASTER

This is where you guys are, under the balcony. You can hear dark, rhythmic chanting in some disturbing, alien tongue. You can't tell what's above you on the platform. You can see a balcony running around the perimeter, with more frog people up there, also chanting, loaded crossbows in their slimy hands.



DRACE

The thing with the star is on the balcony and we are underneath the balcony?

DRACE

The star is a statue that rises up to the height of the balcony. All of the frog people seem to be changing toward it. What do you do?



DRACE

Move along the wall.

CHERRIT

MASTERS!!! I have brought an intruder!

DRACE

Guess we found out where the loyalties lie.

CHERRIT

No, I brought an intruder! Reward ME!

DRACE

Ah... lol.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll for initiative!

It isn't long before Drace rewards his two treacherous companions with death (but not before White-Eyes transformed into a wererat!). However, that victory is short lived, and he soon finds himself in a terrible battle against several kuo toa!

DUNGEON MASTER

The four whips join hands and suddenly a ferocious bolt of electricity fire up from them, hits the statue and intensifies before flying down at you! Roll your Reflex save!!!

:

Finally, Drace manages to overcome the kuo toa...

DRACE

RAAAAARRRRGGH!!!!



DRACE

Drace the Destroyer!!!!

DUNGEON MASTER

But you have no time to celebrate, for the summoning the two kuo toas were doing finally finishes... Aushanna the demon appears!!!

DRACE

Hmmm... right on time! LOL



DUNGEON MASTER

This might be a good place to stop. lol Saved by the bell!
Until next time!





Dallen used his legs to topple it over! Once he did, Aushanna vanished, banished back to whence she came!



After the fierce battle, Dallen inspects the room out of which the kuo toa priest emerged. Filled with water, the room looks less than inviting...

Server started.

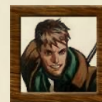
Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.

Dolgar Hammersdam has connected.



Our heroes' adventure in the depths of a kuo-toa temple, deep within the forbidding realm of the Underdark, continues this session.



DALLEN

I want to run and jump off the wall on the right and launch into the room on the left.

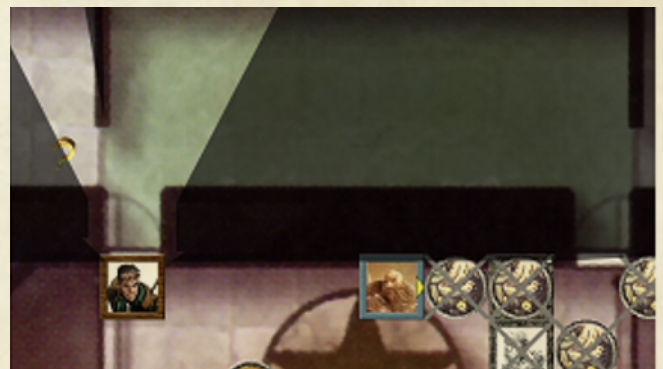
DUNGEON MASTER

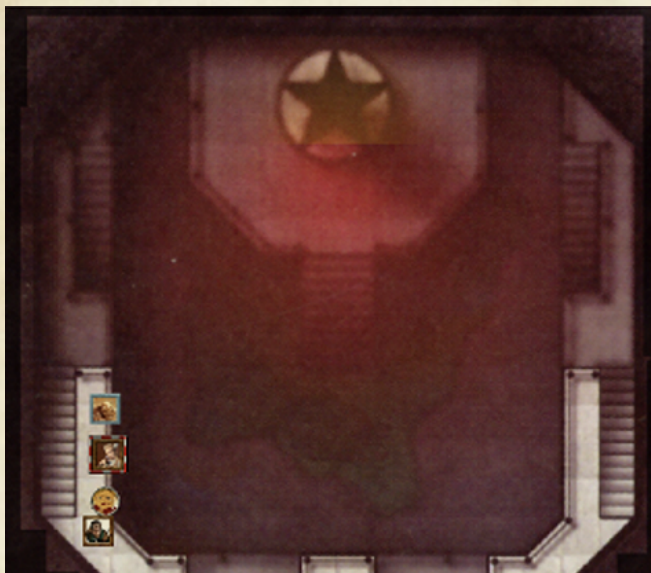
Roll.



The battle quickly turned south when Mangh-Mictho, High Priest of the kuo toa, came out to join Aushanna the demon! A quick casting of darkness and unholy blight helped turn the tide in the villains' favor!

Particularly, Aushanna's arrows deliver punishing damage round after round. Dallen, wary of the magically induced darkness, skirts the perimeter and rushes to the statue, the eyes of which were glowing a fierce red. Climbing the statue, he shattered them with his dagger. Seeing the kuo toa priest double over in agony when he did so, he suddenly had an idea. Wedging himself between the wall and the statue,



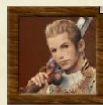


Finally, they reached the throne room of Zenith Splintershield, now the rambling prophet of the kuo toa!



ZENITH SPLINTERSHIELD

The Smoking Eye will wreath your city in flame...



DRACE

He is crazy!

DALLEN

Are you Zenith?

ZENITH SPLINTERSHIELD

I am the one known as Zenith... Do you not recognize me, brother?

DALLEN

Your father sent us.

ZENITH SPLINTERSHIELD

Our father sent both of us. But I'm afraid only one of us can be the inheritor... And I intend it to be me, brother.

DRACE

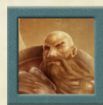
What are you babbling about??

DALLEN

I'm not sure about that ((leans toward Dolgar)) Are you guys brothers?

DALLEN

I'm not sure about that ((leans toward Dolgar)) Are you guys brothers?



DOLGAR

Not that I know of...

DUNGEON MASTER

He is looking at Dallen. He suddenly throws the crystal in his hand at the pillar, and it shatters, sending a shower of sparkling motes drifting gently down to the floor...

DALLEN

((To Zenith)) It's time to leave here.

ZENITH SPLINTERSHIELD

No, it is time... for you to die!



DUNGEON MASTER

Roll for initiative!

They begin fighting Zenith, trying not to kill him. In Zenith's crystal globe, which he had shattered, was an invisible stalker, which began attacking Dolgar (though they at first did not realize what was hitting him!). After Dallen disarms Zenith, Zenith steps into the center of the room, calling out to Dallen once more before vanishing!



ZENITH SPLINTERSHIELD

I will inherit our father's throne, brother!

Dallen leaps after him and also vanished!

DOLGAR

Here goes nothing!

Dolgar and Drace follow!



They all appear back in the chamber with the toppled statue

DUNGEON MASTER

You're lucky. If that statue wasn't destroyed, you'd be trapped in its claws.

There is no sign of Zenith. The invisible stalker, however, followed them through and begins to attack!

DALLEN

Drop my weapons and scoop up a handful of dust from the destroyed statue and throw it into the air over Dolgar.



After finally identifying their attacker, the group battles and eventually destroys it.

At this point, the group is in pretty bad condition, but they have no choice but to continue to search for Zenith Splintershield. They soon come upon a room filled with a strange purple fungus... They are all very reticent about entering, and with good reason—soon after, they are attacked by several violet fungi!

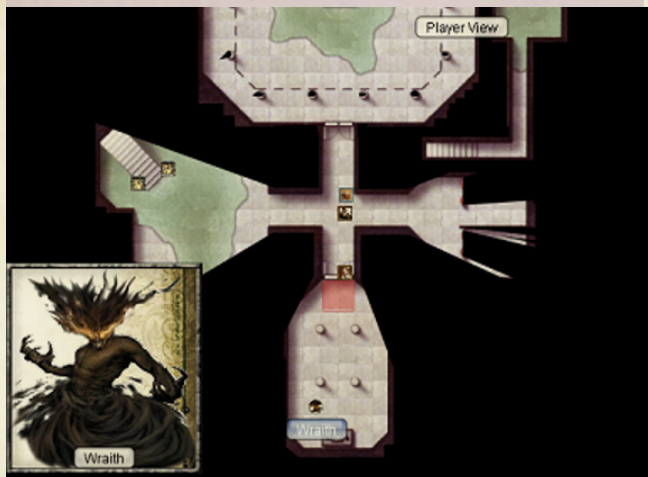


After destroying the flesh-rotting fungus, the party continues their search and comes upon a room with more enemies!



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, we should stop here; this battle will be pretty involved. *Until next time!*



Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

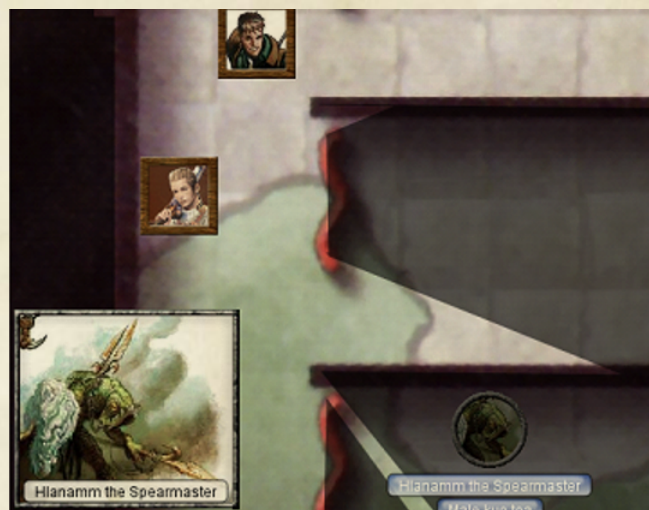
Drace Arlica has connected.

And so our brave heroes continue their search for the elusive—and quite mad—Zenith Splintershield, who is somewhere deep within the humid realm of the evil frog fiends, the kuo toa!

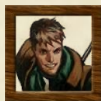


The session began with the two players who showed up quickly in over their heads. Though the kuo toa were a minor nuisance, the wraith managed to sap Drace's Constitution enough times to make him waste two of his Fate Points to get rid of the attribute damage.

However, the two old-time dungeon delvers managed to clear out the area after a few hard-won victories...

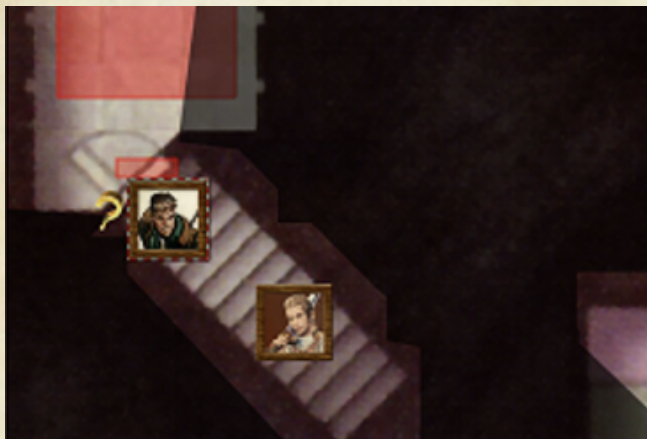


Eventually they climb up a set of stairs, triggering a self-setting lightning bolt trap!



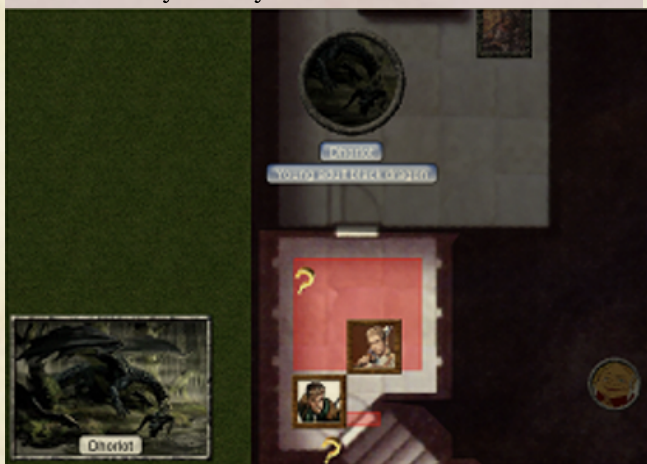
DALLEN

I want to run across the room and burst through the door!



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, you rush across the room and burst through the door—both of you roll your Reflex save!



Dallen manages to make his save, ducking beneath the stream of vile green acid erupting from the black dragon's maw, which then strikes Drace square in the chest! The battle only gets worse from there, and by the end of it both PCs were low on HPs, and Drace out of Fate Points!

DHORLOT THE DRAGON FATHER

I smell the blood of my old enemy, Gotrod! Did he send you? We will not give up the dwarf!



At one point during this terrific battle, Dhorlot the Black Dragon bull rushes Drace back out onto the stairs, triggering the lightning bolt trap, which had reset

itself! It then slammed the door shut, hoping the trap would finish him off, but it would not be so—Dallen bull rushed back into the room, shoving the dragon backward!



ZENITH SPLINTERSHIELD

(To Dallen) It is no use, brother! I will sit upon our father's throne!!!

DALLEN

Okay...

Several rounds pass, and Dallen and Drace nearly find their end at the claws and fangs of Dhorlot, but eventually, Dallen delivers the killing blow...

DUNGEON MASTER

With a great shudder, the terrible beast lets out a fearsome cry, and then collapses in a heap!

DRACE

Phew.

They then returned to Cauldron with Zentih...

DALLEN

He kept speaking of a smoking eye.

CELESTE

Smoking... Eye, you say?

DALLEN

Yeah, and calling everyone brother. And mentioning his father.

CELESTE

Hmm...

DAVKED

Me?

DALLEN

Perhaps... though I doubt it. I think he was referring to something else as his father.

DAVKED

Well, I am sure a cleric can heal him of this madness. I thank you again for your efforts.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll your Perception.

Dallen rolls: $1d20+2 = 3 + 2 = 5$

DALLEN

Splash ale in my face.

DUNGEON MASTER

lol

Drace rolls: $1d20 = > 16$

DUNGEON MASTER

Drace, you notice that Celeste looks more disturbed by all of this news than Davked.

DALLEN

He also made mention of a city in flames...

DRACE

Hmm...

Eventually the conversation wears down, and Drace and Dallen head back to their newly constructed stronghold...



Justin took the Leadership feat for Dallen, granting him 11 followers plus 1 cohort. He placed them all in the stronghold.

Here is a good shot of their north east tower, as well as the stairs that lead to the second floor (which we'll get to shortly):



Here is the captain of Dallen's followers—the human Daic Rob'old (yes—all of the NPCs are named)—training some of them in archery (note the armory to the right):

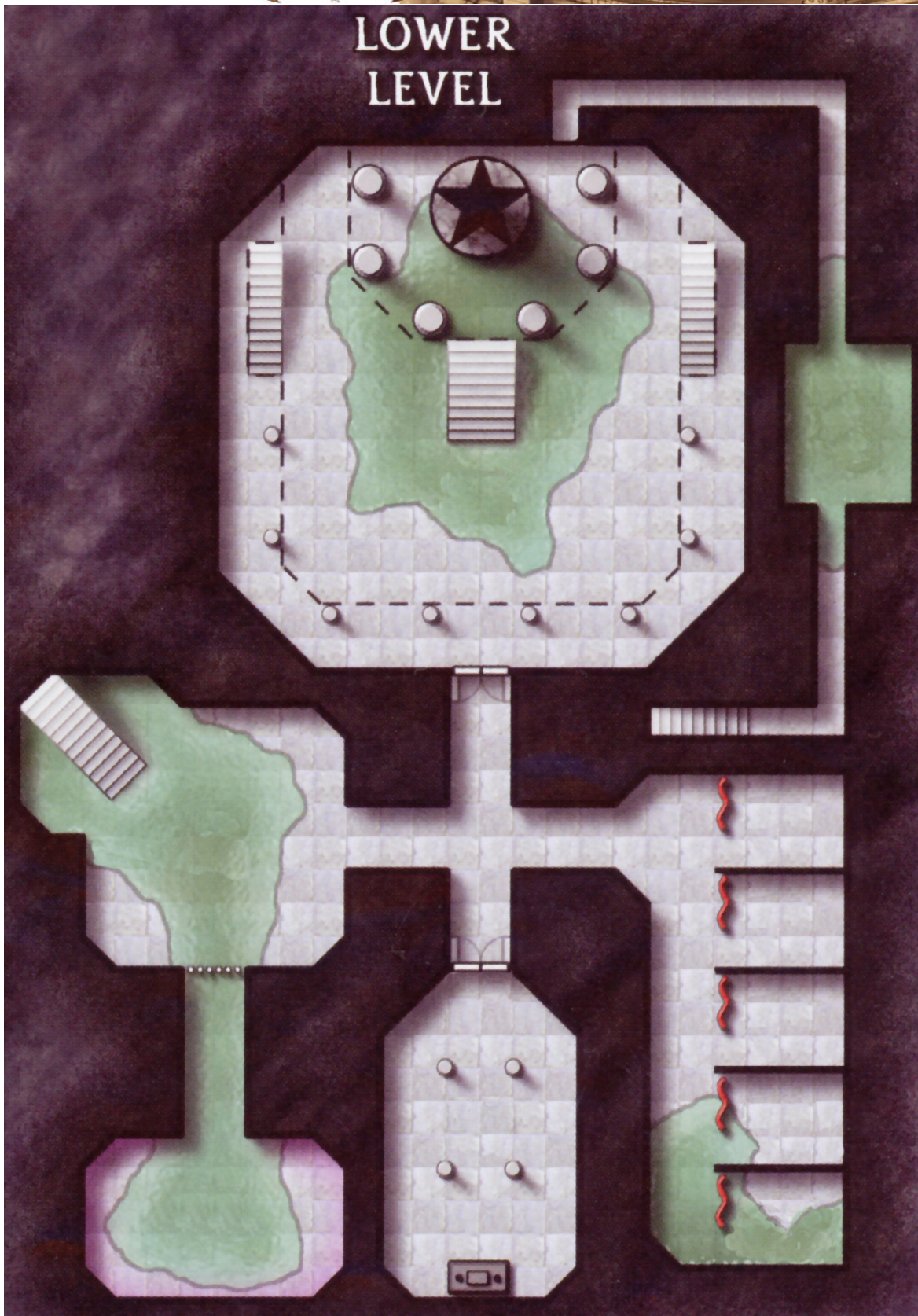


THE SHACKLED CITY

ADVENTURE PATH

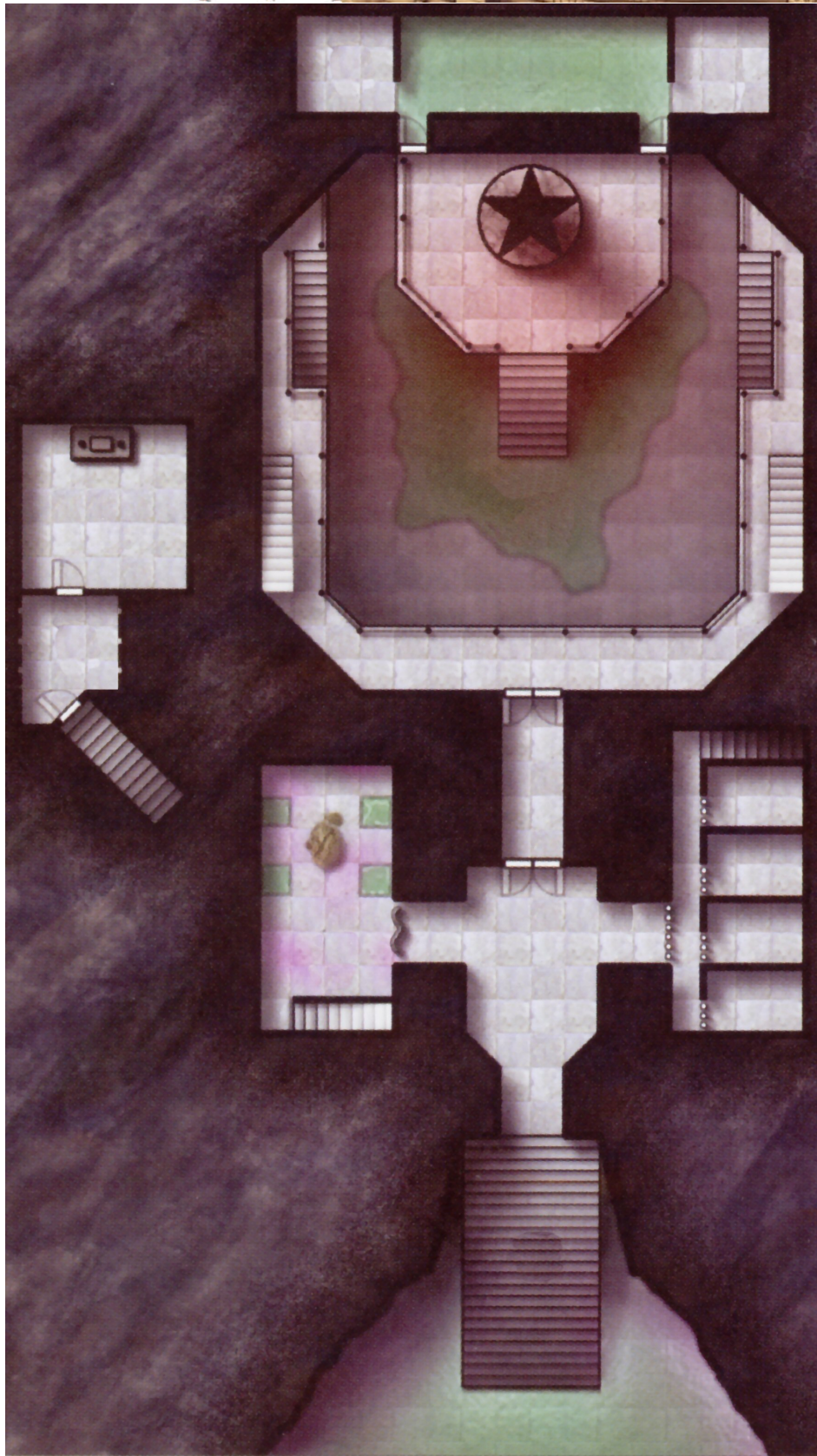


LOWER LEVEL



THE SHACKLED CITY

ADVENTURE PATH

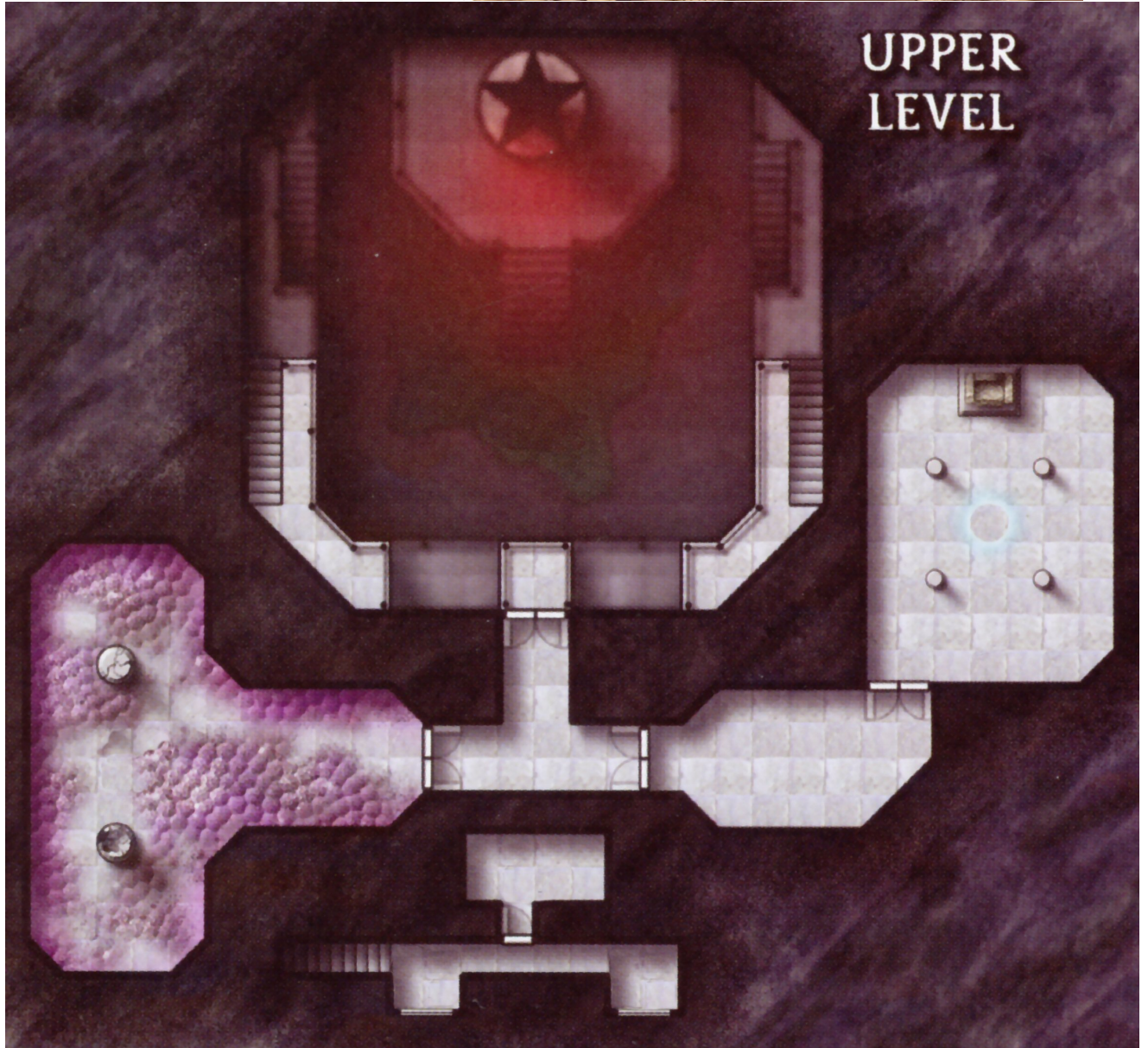


THE SHACKLED CITY

ADVENTURE PATH



UPPER
LEVEL



CHAPTER 4.5: TOMB OF HORRORS

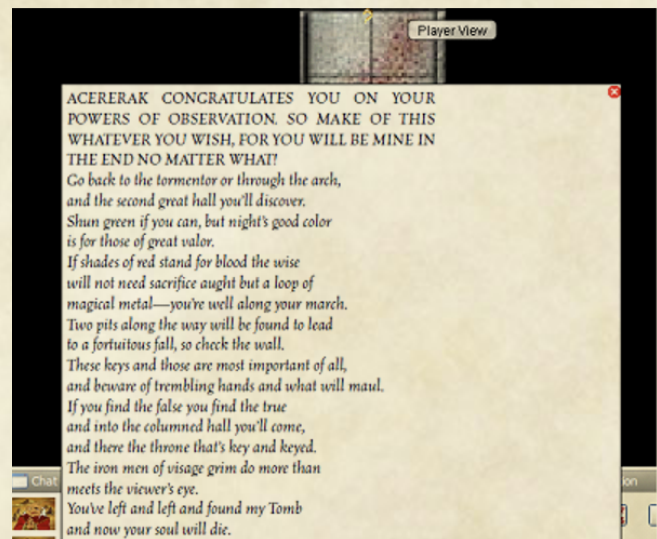
SCREENSHOT:



A week passes, when they are approached by Fellian, Fario, and Shensen. The three mysterious benefactors explain that they had been searching for clues regarding the Cagewrights and the Shackleborn. They say their scholarly inquiries have led them to discover an ancient wizard named Acerak, who worshiped Orcus, the Demon Prince of the Undead. They are not sure what this has to do with Cauldron's troubles, but they ask the PCs to go to this long-dead wizard's tomb to find out. It is far to the east, they explain, deep within a swamp.

Our heroes arrive at the Tomb of Horrors after a week of trekking through a filthy bog, and after finally selecting the correct tunnel in the mountainside (out of three; Dolgar got trapped for a time in a false tunnel that sealed shut behind him), they begin to explore the lair of the lich. They soon come upon a message hidden in runes upon the wall:

SCREENSHOT:



DRACE

Hm...

After a second Perception check, Dolgar discovers a secret door!

DOLGAR

Where is it, in the picture?

DUNGEON MASTER

Here...



DUNGEON MASTER

It's behind the painting of a door, locking some sort of monstrous creature inside.

DOLGAR

Fitting.

The group decides to bypass the door for the moment, and instead investigates the end of the long hall...



DOLGAR

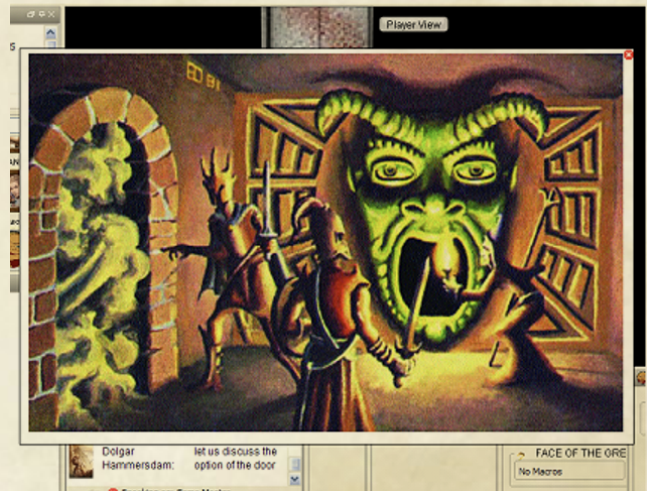
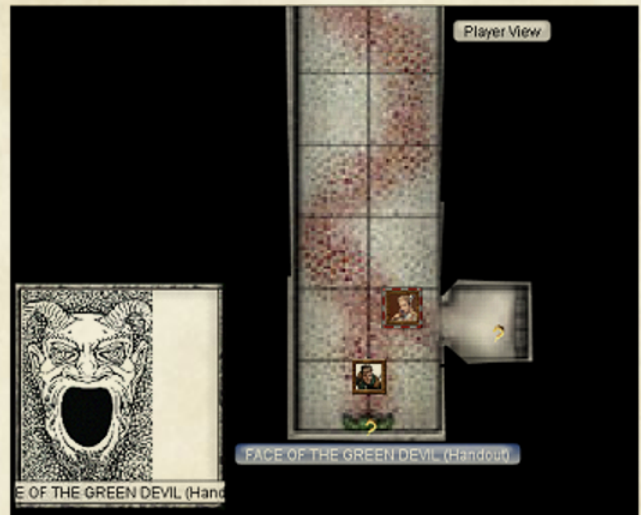
We should walk on the red stones.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay. This is what it looks like:



Eventually they come upon two portals... one is a mist-shrouded doorway, the other a demonic face in the wall with a mouth large enough to crawl through...



DOLGAR

((Gesturing to the green face)) So is this the "tormentor"?

DRACE

Shun green...?

The heroes take a while to investigate the strange mist and green demonic face, but in the end decide to head back to that earlier secret door that Dolgar had discovered...



With the help of about 7 or 8 Fate Points, Dallen and Dolgar eventually are able to bring it down! Dolgar then rushes to Dallen, managing to stabilize the stricken hero just in time!



DUNGEON MASTER

Roll for initiative!

Dallen charges at the four-armed gargoyle—brave, but foolhardy, for this was no mere gargoyle! The beast is able to unleash its full attack, which is considerable! It sends Dallen to the brink of death!



DUNGEON MASTER

You hear a dark chuckling, a sinister sound that seems to emanate from the very walls... And congratulations! You have all earned a bonus Feat! Tremendous Attack! Here's how it works—once per session, you can roll an extra die and add it to your damage! This extra die is a d4. However, you if you roll a 4, you get to re-roll, adding to the sum, until anything other than a 4 is rolled. If you spend 1 Fate Point, instead of a d4, it's a d6. If 2 Fate Points, a d8. And so on.

DRACE

Wow. That's brutal!

The two still-conscious heroes then placed Dallen in their makeshift raft they used to traverse the swamp, and continued to search the Tomb of Acererak. Eventually they come to a long, long hall filled with many secret doors (and two false doors that turned out to be traps!). This is where they decided to call it a night. Until next time!



Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.



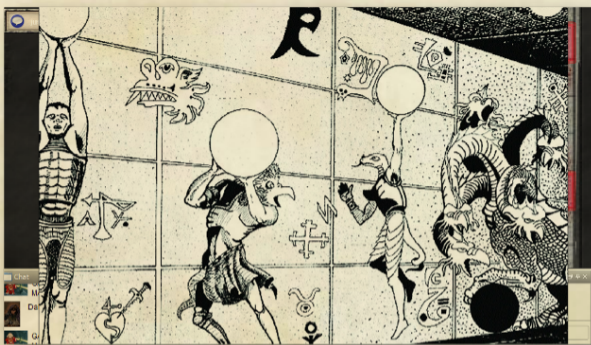
AND THEN THERE WERE TWO

There was a 2 1/2-year gap between the last session and this one, and in that time Jon/Dolgar's schedule had changed so he wasn't able to resume the campaign. Like Deanna and Krag, Dolgar became an NPC back in Cauldron.

So we decided to bring back Kyra and Lini-Lini with her new animal companion, a snow leopard named Droogami.



Behind them, the PCs see a mural on the wall:



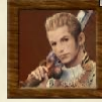
Above the half-orc on the far left, the sphere is GREEN. The falcon-headed creature next to it holds a YELLOW sphere. The yuan-ti a PINK sphere. And finally, a BLACK sphere under the menacing HYDRA.

DALLEN

Hm... There are columns. And also rows. 1, 2, 1, 4. That's the sequence...

DUNGEON MASTER

Might be worth noting.



DRACE

Disco mutants?



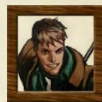
LINI & DROOGAMI

LINI

I forgot how much I dislike the smell of dungeons...

KYRA

This place reeks of evil. How in the Realms did you manage to discover such a wretched place?



DALLEN

Dungeons... you wanna talk about dungeons... this is the grand library of Almraiven compared to some of the stinking dens I've seen.

LINI

Droogami doesn't like it here...

DUNGEON MASTER

Where to?

DALLEN

((Is that door open with the jar in it?))

DUNGEON MASTER

Yep.

DALLEN

((lay a description on me))

DUNGEON MASTER

"Dust cover the remains of a wizard's storeroom like snow. Fallen shelves, smashed crockery, glass shards from dozens of smashed potion vials, and corroded alchemical tools litter the floor. However, in the northwest corner of the room, something gray and shriveled sloshes within a grimy glass container."



DALLEN

Is there a lid on the jar?



DUNGEON MASTER

Yes.

DALLEN

Cast *open* on it.

DUNGEON MASTER

The lid pops off and clatters to the cluttered floor.

DALLEN

Okay, cast *mage hand* and lift out the contents and place it on the counter next to the jar.

DUNGEON MASTER

The brain floats out, dripping with fetid water.

DALLEN

Hmmm... is it still moving? Pick it up with *mage hand* and tumble it around letting the water drip off.

DUNGEON MASTER

Twitching.



KYRA

Disgusting.

DALLEN

It's some kind of creature, I am sure. What do you make of it Kyra?

KYRA

Let me see if I can divine its spirit.

DALLEN

{{purple,#book,text-align:left;background:#aa88aa55
I've got a bad feeling about this...

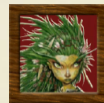
DUNGEON MASTER

Roll Perception.

Dallen rolls: 1d20+2 => 3 + 2 = 5

DALLEN

So we're just gonna roll 3s today.



LINI

Drace, what are you doing?

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+10 => 15 + 10 = 25

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d6+1d6 => 4 + 3 = 7

DUNGEON MASTER

You are all startled by the sudden CRASHING of THUNDER! Blood spurts out of Kyra's shoulder. Kyra seems shocked. Drace is standing there with a pistol, ready to fire again at her. Roll for initiative!

It didn't take out heroes long to figure out the disgusting brain had dominated Drace.

DALLEN

I'm going to make it into a cat toy.

After a round of battle, Dallen uses mage hand to set the brain down next to Droogami so it can unleash its full attack...



DUNGEON MASTER

Droogami savages the brain into tiny splatters of gray matter.

LINI

Good boy, good boy...

DALLEN

I told ya I'd make it into a cat toy, mates!

DUNGEON MASTER

Kyra kicks the jar over onto the floor.

They then returned to the mural, where they discovered secret tunnels in two of the orbs...



One tunnel opened into a chapel...



KYRA

An unholy temple if I ever saw one.



DUNGEON MASTER

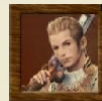
An altar at the far end of the room sheds a soft-blue light.

DALLEN

(Dallen glances briefly at the mural.)

DUNGEON MASTER

The mural seems to be telling a story... As you look over it, it looks like an idyllic human community building a town... But then you see a shrine to the Demon Lord ORCUS in the mural, among the peaceful-looking humans.

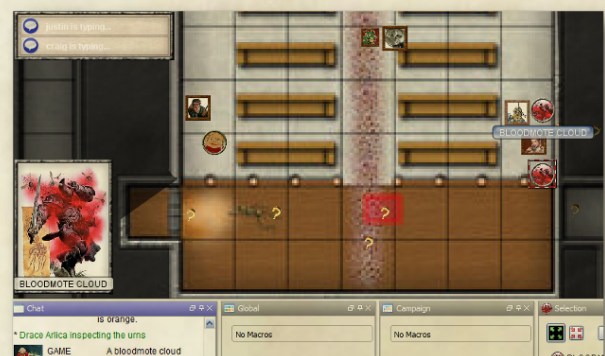


DRACE

(Drace Arlica inspects the urns...)

DUNGEON MASTER

A bloodmote cloud emerges!



The bloodmote swarms prove to be particularly rough on Drace, who is forced to use many of his Fate Points to heal his Con drain. But eventually Lini's new animal companion delivers the killing blows on both swarms!

LINI

Good boy! Yes you are! Yes you are!

Dallen goes back to inspecting the mural...



DUNGEON MASTER

It seems to be a portrait showing a community of Orcus worshipers. Building a sort of community to him. You also see a shining pool of silvery water near the Orcus shrine...

DALLEN

Hmmm... (Dallen examines the silvery water in the mural.)

DUNGEON MASTER

Nothing more unusual.

DRACE

Did anyone search the altar?

DUNGEON MASTER

Not yet...

DALLEN

No. I think there may be monsters in it, Drace. Only because you seem to be attracted to booby-trapped items.

DUNGEON MASTER

Do you search it?

DRACE

Yeah.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll your Reflex saving throw!

DRACE

GOD DAMMIT.

Drace rolls: $d20+8 \Rightarrow 10 + 8 = 18$

DUNGEON MASTER

The altar explodes in a hellish burst of fire and black, snapping electricity that leaps across your skin. You take...

Dungeon Master rolls: $10d6+60 \Rightarrow 26 + 60 = 86$

DUNGEON MASTER

Half for 43 damage!

DALLEN

This is what ten-foot poles are for.

DUNGEON MASTER

The altar is now a smoldering ruin.

The experience of the urns and the exploding altar left Drace over-paranoid the rest of the session, and the gungslinging fighter spent the rest of the time hanging back as often as he could.

The group continued to explore the tomb of Acererak, barely avoiding a blistering death at a tilting floor trap only thanks to Drace's boots of spider climb and Dallen's quick-thinking use of feather fall, and finding a room with three chests and even more ways to die (though a chest full of vipers was rendered useless, thanks to Dallen's color spray spell)...



Further exploration used up all avenues of option... or so they thought...

DUNGEON MASTER

Now where to?

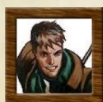
DALLEN

Back to the face of the green devil.

They head back...

DUNGEON MASTER

Around the mist, Dallen, you see stones of the same color as the mural in the hallway—the disco mutants.



DALLEN

What color mist?

DUNGEON MASTER

Red.

DALLEN

Touch green, yellow, pink, and black.

DUNGEON MASTER

In that order?

DALLEN

Yes.

DUNGEON MASTER

The mist turns clear, like fog.



DALLEN

Can we climb in the demon's mouth...?

DUNGEON MASTER

It's large enough... Pure blackness within

DALLEN

No light reaches in?



DUNGEON MASTER

None.

DALLEN

Detect magic.

Dallen thinks long and hard, staring back and forth between the mist and the demon's mouth. Then finally...

DALLEN

(Dallen looks at the group) You only live once (step into the mist).

DRACE

Are you mad?!

DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen vanishes. Does anyone follow?

KYRA

Hm...

LINI

I will go... come on, Droogami...

DRACE

Gods...

Finally the rest follow...

DUNGEON MASTER

Blackness...

DRACE

Campaign over! lol

DUNGEON MASTER

Coldness... Then you find yourselves in a shroud of mist.

DALLEN

Ah, yes... the cold darkness. (Dallen breaths deep the mist and grins.)

DUNGEON MASTER

Below you, down the stairs, you see this:



DUNGEON MASTER

Roll for initiative!

DALLEN

We found a gods damned lich.

DRACE

Of course we did!

Drace rolls: $d20 + 6 \Rightarrow 16 + 6 = 22$

Dallen rolls: $1d20 + 6 \Rightarrow 13 + 6 = 19$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20 \Rightarrow 1$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20 + 3 \Rightarrow 6 + 3 = 9$

Dungeon Master rolls: $1d20 + 3 \Rightarrow 16 + 3 = 19$



DUNGEON MASTER

Drace goes first!



DALLEN

Is that Sassycrack?

DUNGEON MASTER

You are uncertain.

DALLEN

"If you find the false..."



DRACE

Full attack!

Thanks to the lich's Damage Reduction, Drace's bullets do little damage—if any. But Dallen spies the MACE upon the floor...

DALLEN

Kyra, get the mace! ((I cast numbing sphere as a rime spell level 3, and touch that bitch with it.))



KYRA

I see it!

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, Dallen. But as it goes on the same initiative as you, it reaches out with a dessicated finger. A thin green beam leaps out, striking Drace for...

Dungeon Master rolls: $22d6 \Rightarrow 81$

DUNGEON MASTER

...81 damage!

Fortunately, Drace still had Fate Points remaining and avoiding being turned into a pile of dust.

*Drace's spells are quite an annoyance to the lich—especially the Dex damage, but it responds with a cone of cold, **and then** a mirror image **on the following round.***

DUNGEON MASTER

He casts *MIRROR IMAGE*.

DALLEN

Dispel magic! I have to make a Spellcraft check.

DUNGEON MASTER

Nice. DC 22.

DALLEN

Damn you Besmera, Queen of the Deep; You've had your powers against me all this time—give me but one break you merciless bitch!

Dallen rolls: 1d20+11 => 9 + 11 = 20

DUNGEON MASTER

Damn, that would've been epic!

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d4+3 => 4 + 3 = 7



DUNGEON MASTER

Now there are 8 of him.

The duplicate illusionary images save the lich just in time from Kyra's strike with the mace—which happened to be a +5 mace of disruption—as she scores a hit, but only manages to cause one of the false images to disappear!

But Dallen's continued use of magic, which entangled and continued to drain the lich of its Dexterity, Kyra's mace, and Lini's conjured flaming sphere, causes the lich to teleport out of it... straight behind Drace.



DRACE

Are you being serious right now?

DUNGEON MASTER

lol Yes. Liches have no sense of humor.

DRACE

So I've heard.

LINI

Where did it go...?



DROOGAMI

Rawr!!!

DALLEN

It fled like a coward!

KYRA

Cowardly fiend!

DRACE

I'm going to shove its phylactery up its—

But instead, the lich reached out with vampiric touch, draining Drace of some of his life force and paralyzing him!



The battle rages on. Kyra is eventually taken out by a shout spell, Dallen is brought within 5 hit points of unconsciousness, and Drace used the rest of his Fate Points—plus 1 of Dallen’s—just to survive the battle.

After Dallen dodged one of its lightning bolts, its rotted visage twisted into a mask of rage.



LICH

LICH

Gah, son of the Eye! You think we would not recognize your stench? Now we know you live! You cannot escape us...

LINI

What’s he talking about, Dallen...?

DALLEN

I do not know...

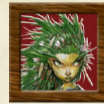
Eventually Lini scooped up the fallen mace, scoring a hit...

DUNGEON MASTER

Lini screams, bringing the mace down on the lich’s head! The head shatters in a brilliant explosion of light, as does the mace!

DRACE

The Mace!!!! NOOOO!!!!



LINI

I don’t like this place...

DUNGEON MASTER

You hear a cruel, disembodied voice call out, “Hahahahaha... Well done, Dallen. I look forward to devouring your soul. You may be your father’s son, but you are no match for me. Come for me if you dare.”

DALLEN

How do these people all know my name and all these titles?

DUNGEON MASTER

There’s a body at the end of the hall, around the corner, as well. A rotted dwarf clutching an oversized journal.

The group decided to stay in the tomb for the night, allowing their cleric to awaken and for everyone to heal and regain spells. Dallen also cracked open the dwarven journal and read from its pages...

DATED TARASHKH 10TH, 1353.

How did it come to this? The arrogant belief in the superiority of one’s skills and the skills of one’s allies. The overconfidence in the strength of one’s chosen deity. The lust for glory and treasure. Perhaps a bit of all three. But when my comrades and I were approached by the Illusken woman and her incredible tale, we only heard the parts about there possibly being treasure. We conveniently ignored the warnings. The dire warnings that only now seem to scream into my ears. But she had such a fantastic tale. The ravings of a madwoman is what I really thought, now that I consider my state of mind more clearly. Unclouded by the fantasies of endless riches and magical treasures that surely awaited us once we found this tomb.

But she wasn’t interested in treasure. She wanted only one thing—her boy. Her precious boy who had ran away when he was but nine years old. None of us had the heart to tell the crazy old woman that the boy was likely long dead. No, instead we would follow her lead to this lich-haunted ruin out in the middle of nowhere, far from our homes back to the northeast. We didn’t listen to her dire warnings about the Lords of Four. Who could believe such a tale, I ask again?

She claimed that she was from over three hundred years in the past, and that she was once a powerful and beautiful sorceress who was courted by four quadruplets—all powerful Red Wizards of Thay. But when she rebuked their advances for the love of a Demon Lord named ADIMARCHUS and became pregnant, the brothers' jealousy knew no limits, and in their rage, they attempted to slay the half-demon spawn in her belly. But she sacrificed her own magic in order to save her unborn child, and the two hurtled through space and time, ending up far in the future... to our time, if you believe her tale. But her powers were forever sealed to her. So she was forced to sell her body just to survive, but she never gave up hope that one day her son would regain the prominence that she once had and become a powerful Red Wizard of Thay himself.

But she knew she had to keep him away from the quadruplets. After her disappearance, she learned the four Thayan brothers made a pact with the Demon Lord Orcus, the Prince of the Undead, who was at war with Adimarchus, the hated one, the Lord of Madness. They sold their souls to Orcus, learning the path to lichdom, and the four undead magi joined Orcus's ranks as some of his most powerful champions on the Material Plane: Szass Tam, Lord Myrakul, Acererak, and the most powerful of them all, Zhengyi, the Witch King of Vaasa. These powerful liches, now known as the Lords of Four, helped Orcus trick and defeat Adimarchus, though the fate of this demon lord remains unclear to us...

Our search led us to the discovery of a secret cult who worship Adimarchus. The Cagewrights, they are called. They are at work around the region of the city of Cauldron, but we know not more information, except that they have been searching ancient, forbidden knowledge from the kingdom of the spell weaver kingdom that once existed in Chult thousands of years ago. They have been using the knowledge of the spell weavers for some unknown but no doubt terrible purpose, by using ancient artifacts known as the soul pillars. When we attempted to learn more, our Halfling rogue was kidnapped. Her head was sent to us the next day, with a joker's smiling face painted on it. We decided to let well enough alone and move on.

But it was through investigating this terrible organization that we learned of the location of this tomb, which belongs to one of the Lords of Four, Acererak. We didn't know what we were getting into when we came here to scour the lich's tomb. We certainly didn't think we'd find the Illuskan woman's son. But we also didn't think we would find out doom. For Acererak uses this tomb for something unholy. Souls that perish here fuel some unknown purpose. Some sort of dark magic. A ritual that Acererak is conducting, though for what fell purpose I know not. But I do know that the souls of my comrades, all of whom have fallen, did not make it to their reward in the afterlife.

And neither will mine. For I now remain trapped, mortally wounded from an arrow trap, and once the last of my life bleeds from me, my soul too will fall victim to Acererak's terrible purpose.

I grow tired now. And my ink runs low. I will rest a bit. So cold down here... Maybe I will have more strength after sleeping, just for a time...



DUNGEON MASTER

And that's where we stopped for the night. *Until next time!*



Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Drace Arlica has connected.

After resting for 24 hours, our heroes are ready to continue their search of the Tomb of Horrors!

During their rest, Lini got quite bored. She searched every square inch of the room, finding two secret doors:



KYRA

Shall we explore the new corridor Lini discovered?

The PCs agree with their cleric, and soon come upon a ramshackle room...



DALLEN

Curtain must be old and tattered... I can see passages beyond...

DUNGEON MASTER

Yeah, moldy and green.

DALLEN

Green mold, you say?

DUNGEON MASTER

It does appear so.



DALLEN

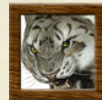
I want to stand back and ruffle it with *mage hand*.

DUNGEON MASTER

The whole thing collapses, and green slime splatters onto the floor.

LINI

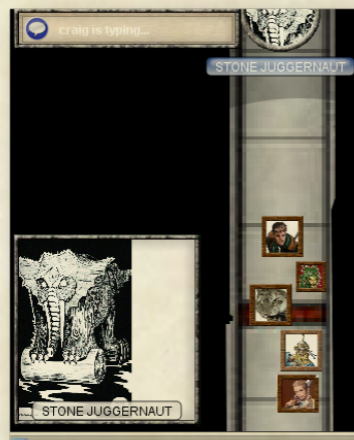
Ew....



DROOGAMI

Sniff... sniff... Growl...!

After avoiding the green slime death room, they continue on until they run into a **STONE JUGGERNAUT** blocking their path!



DRACE

Maybe draw it out and two-way flank it.

DALLEN

At least prevent it from rolling over all of us...

Their plan starts to work, with a clever use of grease via Dallen causing it to crash onto its side for a time in an intersection...



But it doesn't stay down for long! It chases after Drace and Kyra. They run behind a door, and Dallen uses mage hand to slam it shut...



DRACE

Careful Kyra...not sure the door will hold...

DUNGEON MASTER

BOOM! The door BURSTS apart in a shower of splinters!

DALLEN

It still cost it an action!

DUNGEON MASTER

True.



But the juggernaut continues to pursue—eventually forcing Drace and Kyra into a cavern with a powerful undead with an enchanting melody!





DRACE

Out of the fryin' pan...

DUNGEON MASTER

Drace finds the music alluring... he wants to stop and do nothing but listen...

DRACE

...AND DANCE!!!

Kyra soon falls under the enchantment as well, and with both unable to move—and quickly being drained of levels—the juggernaut has no problem smashing them into bits... killing them both.

Dallen, knowing he is unable to take on the monsters with just brave Lini and Droogami at his side, delves deeper into a dungeon. Soon comes upon a room with a stoppered bottle in the middle of the room, and smoke leaking out...



Dallen reaches for the stopper... unplugs it...

DUNGEON MASTER

An EFREETI leaps out! Stretches its massive arms and ROARS! Then, it turns, regarding you with dark eyes...



EFREETI

You have freed me from the demilich's prison. For this, mortal, you shall be rewarded...

The efreeti grants Dallen and Lini wishes, with which Kyra and Drace are brought back to life and restored. The efreeti then tells them where to find Acererak, the demilich, giving them critical information on how to destroy the vile creature. Armed with this knowledge—and some pre-BBEG buffing—they head into the final chamber...

ACERERAK

Finally... You have come, son of Adimarchus. Bastard flesh of my hated enemy. I look forward to devouring your soul...

When they entered the pillared room, Dallen uses a scroll of summon monster...

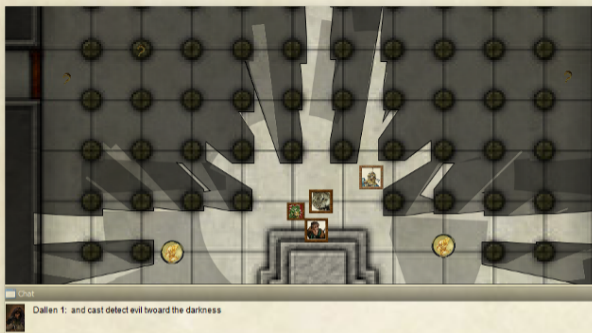
DALLEN

summon 1d3 lantern archons.

Dallen rolls: 1d3 => 2

DALLEN

Tell them to flank out on either side of the dais we're standing on, and cast detect evil toward the darkness.



They hunt through the darkness, searching while Acererak taunts them. They finally come upon it in the northwest corner...



DUNGEON MASTER

The DEMILICH, hovering in mid air, opens its mouth. A BLACK STREAM of negative energy vomits out, enveloping the archon. The archon's soul is sucked into the demilich. The body immediately smolders into black goo.

ACERERAK

Delicious...

But Acererak's victory is short lived—a critical hit from Dallen shows him the error of his hubris!

ACERERAK

Gaaahhh.....!!! NNNOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

DUNGEON MASTER

Lights SPILL out of the skull... CRACKS – and BURSTS – Its eyes and teeth, all made from GEMS, clatter to the floor.

DRACE

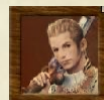
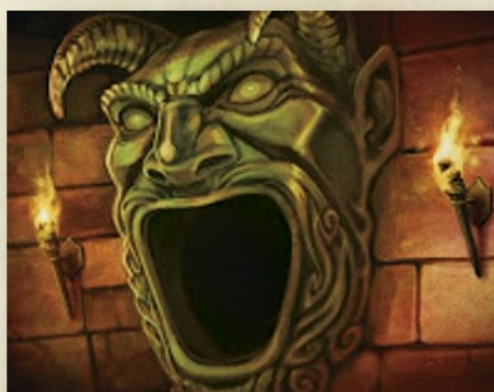
..... ((Didn't even see Acererak...))

DUNGEON MASTER

Two demon faces in the northern corns begun sucking everything in... stone gets torn up from the floor... The pillars crack... the wind howls...

DALLEN

We need to get out of here...



DRACE

Exit stage left!!! Feets don't fail me now!!!

KYRA

This entire place is getting sucked back to the Abyss, whence it came

The heroes rush out just in time, as the entire tomb collapses on itself like the opening scene of THE AVENGERS!

DALLEN

Fall back onto the swampy grass.

It takes a week for the PCs to get back to Cauldron. When they arrive, they see that conditions have not gotten any better. The people are on the verge of rioting against the higher taxes and the half-orc mercenaries, who make them feel like prisoners in their own city.

Dallen learns that Maavu has become the voice of the people, holding meetings and collecting a list of grievances.

But first thing's first—Dallen holds a private meeting at the Chultan House with the ones who sent him on this latest mission to begin with: Fario, Fellian, and Shensen...



FARIO

It is good to see you return unkilld, Dallen.

DALLEN

That's right. If you pointy ears wants to kill me, you're gonna have to try harder than that!

SHENSEN

We hardly wish you dead; please tell us what you have learned.



Dallen fills the three in with what he learned—about Acererak, the Lords of Four, their connection with the Cagewrights and the Demon Lord Adimarchus, and finally his dubious parentage...

DALLEN

But it doesn't add up... my mother always told me that my father was a powerful Thayan wizard...



FELLIAN

Worry not. We will get to the bottom of this. Thank you again for all of your help.

Dallen then went to visit with Maavu, offering him a deal he couldn't refuse.

DALLEN

I'd like to bring him in as a partner on the Chultan House financial situation. His end of the deal would be to extend lines of credit to members in good standing at a discounted rate; we got our loan at 12%, but I am thinking much lower than this to help outfit members for expeditions. In return, I will give him 1% of monthly earnings for his lowered interest rates and extending lines of credit. I will also give him access to free (within reason) protection in any of his endeavors located inside Cauldron.

If he would be willing to go down as low as 3% that would be ideal, I'd like to bump that up to a final offer of 4% to the member for an added handling fee of 1% to go to the Chultan House.

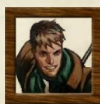
The Chultan House would be ultimately responsible for all lines of credit and collection. This would be compounding, unlike our loan for the Chultan House retrofitting which was a flat rate of 12%.

Members would be required to sign a contract stating that they will forfeit membership to the Chultan House and require to return any equipment up to repayment plus a penalty of 20% for trouble.

If in due course the repayment through confiscation is met without hardship to the house a member may retain his charter to the group under review by the Heads of Members home house. If after a year and a day from repayment thru confiscation the member has remained in good standing he may be readmitted to full membership.

DUNGEON MASTER

Maavu almost seems distracted as you're telling him all this.



DALLEN

Am I boring you?



MAAVU

What? No, sorry. I'm just concerned about the going-ons in Cauldron. Alek Tercival should have returned by now. As you may recall, he was going to challenge the Captain of the Guard, Terseon Skellerang, to a duel, per the Law of Peers.

DALLEN

Yes.

MAAVU

He issued the challenge, but before a response could be given, he suddenly left town, saying it was an urgent matter. He said he would return within a week. It's been eight days...

DALLEN

You know paladins. I'm sure he's fine.

MAAVU

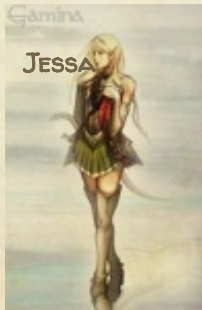
I hope you're right, Dallen... as for this matter, 3% sounds like a fair and honest offer. I accept. I will have my factors run the numbers and my lawyer write up a contract on the morrow.

Their business concluded, Drace thanked the merchant and retired to the Chultan House.

Meanwhile, Drace decided that his latest brush with death showed him what was truly important in life... and that's his lady friend, Jessa, whom he decided to marry. Drace is retiring (Craig, his player, will be replacing him with the human fighter DUNJUN starting next session) from adventuring, and will instead work toward the best interests of the Chultan House.

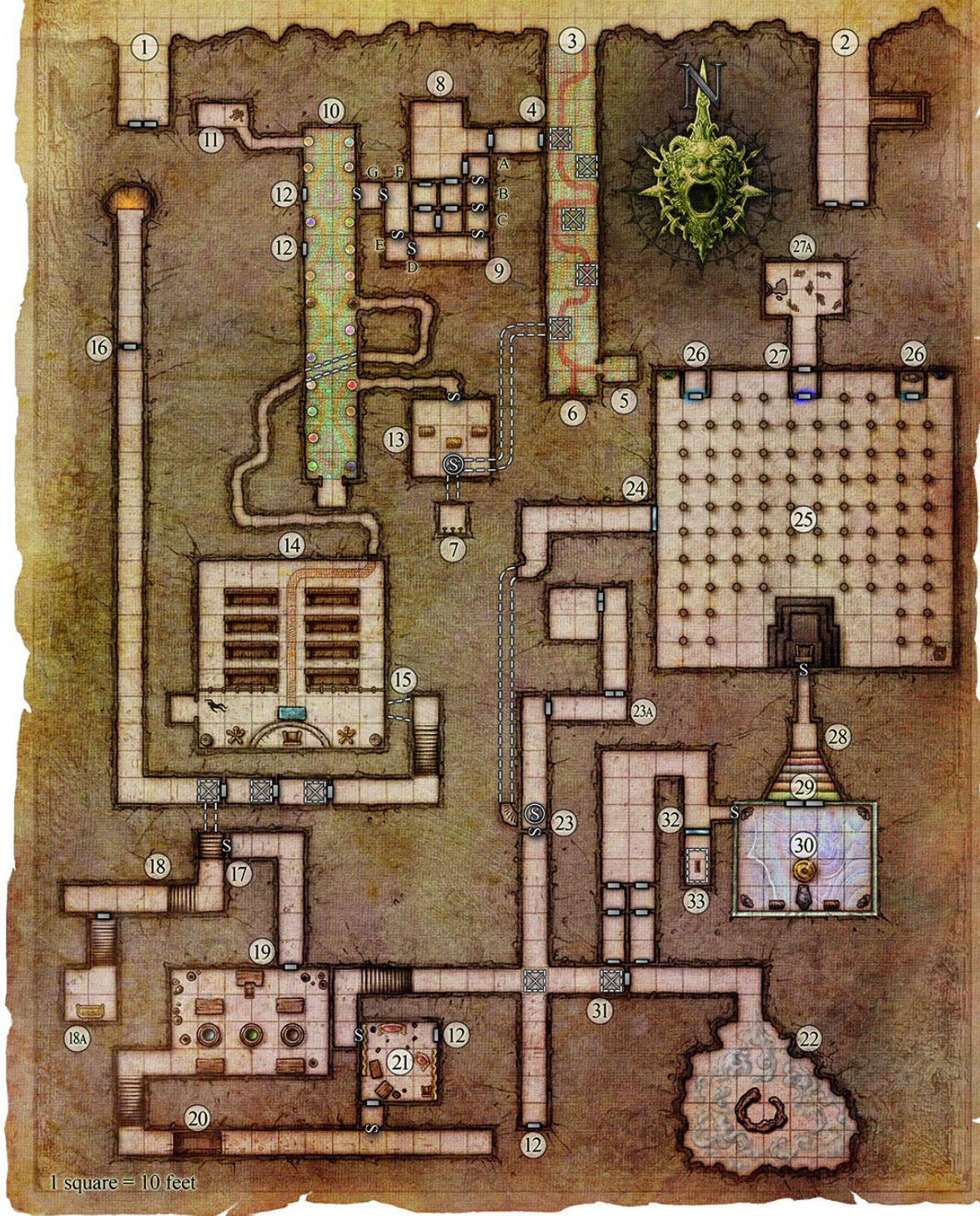
QUESTIONS & CLUES

- The Cagewrights worship a Demon Lord named Adimarchus, who has been absent from his throne ever since his defeat at the hands of the Demon Lord Orcus, Prince of the Undead.
- Is it true? Is Dallen the bastard son of Adimarchus?
- What are the Soul Pillars?
- The Lords of Four are quadruplets who allied themselves with Orcus and who hate Adimarchus. They are now 4 powerful lichs.





Tomb of Horrors



NEW CAST!



WO NEW PLAYERS, AND FOUR NEW CHARACTERS this session! First up is Craig's new character:

ACREN "DUNJUN" DOVA

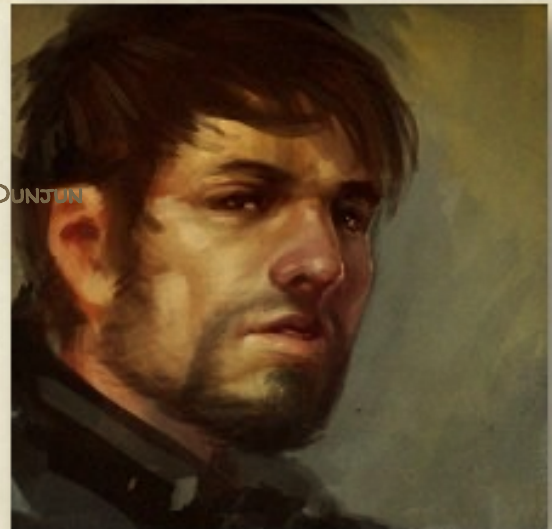
(Craig's new character, replacing the retirement of Drace Arlica. History below submitted by Craig.)

While construction of the Chultan Common House was under way a strange thing happened. While the masons and carpenters toiled amid the foundations of the Common House, a man burst through a foundation wall that had been constructed, followed by a cloud of thick ashen smoke. Seemingly from out of nowhere. He was covered from head to toe in pitch black soot and was dressed in strange attire that was unfamiliar to the inhabitants of the Common House. The tunnel that he had come through had collapsed behind him. He carried a large emerald jewel that was wrapped in a sleek metallic form of a dragon. The emerald covered in fine golden filigree. It stood out in stark contrast to his blackened form, which made it obvious that the relic did not belong to him...

He claims to be from another place. A world that is composed of land masses that float through the sky as clouds do. Where air ships travel to and fro like the common sea going vessels of Farun. Where men have harnessed the power of steam and clockwork to create massive feats of engineering. Who this man really is and where he came from is still a mystery...maybe what he says is true.

When the members of the CSE return from their latest quest, Acren decides that it is time to begin his quest to find out where he is, how he got here, and how to find is way home...

His strange plate armor that adorns his breast and shoulders are claimed to be ripped from fallen "War-jacks" He speaks with an accent that is foreign to all in the Chultan Common house and as far as anyone can tell foreign to the whole of Farun. He wields a large instrument he refers to as his "Steamo". A large bladed pipe wrench of sorts. And a large shield of an unknown make, adorned with a network of cogs and wheels engraved with ornate line-work and gilded in all manner of precious metal. Though a sight to behold, and beautiful still, it is dented and tarnished from heavy use. Around his neck he wears a large chain with numerous cogs. Each made of a different material. Heavily worn goggles rest on his head. His entire ensemble is covered in a heavy leather long coat, burned and frayed here and there. Branded on the left breast of the coat, the name DUNJUN...

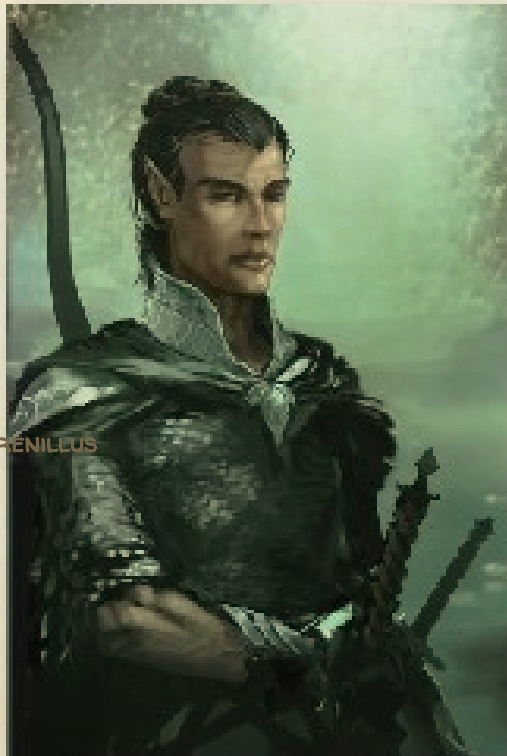


ORENILLUS "ROOK" CATHAIS

(New player—Emerson. History below submitted by him.)

Orenillus Cathais hails originally from the Moon Elves enclave, where he spent the first 200 years of his life studying arcane mysteries and battlefield tactics. At age 201, he joined the entourage of the elven ambassador to Waterdeep as a specialist attaché in Spellcraft and Arcana. A decade in politics taught him that he did not have the people skills for diplomacy advancement, whereupon he joined the Army of Amn and served as a distinguished Battlemage and Exorcist for 50 years. During this time he gained renown as a tough tactical analyst and godsend to troops in the field. His penchant for chess and tide turning saboteur/protection spells gained him the nickname "Rook." Retiring from the Army at age 264 he has spent the last several decades as a military consultant, freelance demon hunter and defensive installation aficionado. He enjoys the company of bulwarks and crenellations far more than that of people, particularly short lived races, whom he finds to be irrational and short-sighted. When not giving orders his words are spent largely on his armadillo familiar, Gorthrim, who is named with the Elven word for The Dead in tribute to the many soldiers he has seen fall during his tenure as an officer. Although he is not a friendly person, he possesses a deeply ingrained sense of duty to his comrades in arms, and will stop at nothing to ensure the safety of his allies and the destruction of his foes.

During the past year he has watched the events unfolding in his old haunts and organizations and has come to the conclusion that he must contribute in a larger way to the solution. Drawn initially to the conflict on the plains of Amn and the presence of devils in the world, he has since decided that often the most effective way into a fortress is under the postern gate at midnight. Consequently he has come to Cauldron chasing rumors of an up and coming band of adventurers who have been making a name for themselves in the area. Hoping to assist this corps of individuals in their quests, The Rook plans to convince them to help restore order in the land.



CLESCET

(New player: Mike.)

Clescet, a human rogue/assassin, is as mysterious as he is cold, detached, and deadly. Nobody knows much about him, only that gold is his only morality, and death is his only vocation. Whatever his past holds, it's like not to be a tale meant to warm hearts and conjure smiles.



AUGUSTUS

(Tim's character replacing Krag the Many Named. A cleric, Augustus was selected to officiate over Drace and Jessa's wedding, which is where we began our session...)



CHAPTER FIVE: THE DEMONSKAR LEGACY



Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Dunjun has connected.

Augustus has connected.

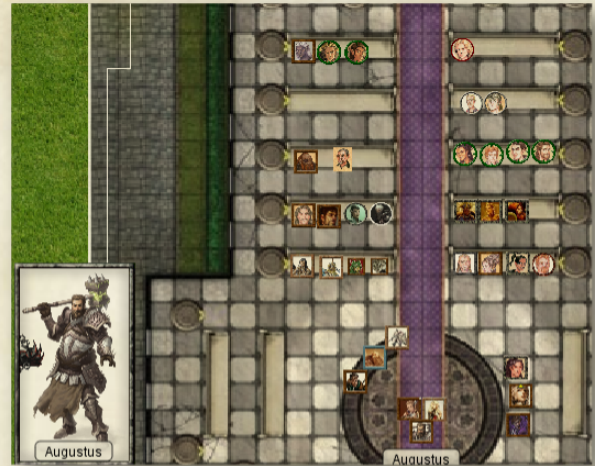
Clescet has connected.

Orenillus has connected.



AUGUSTUS

My friends, we are gathered here today to celebrate one of life's greatest moments, to give recognition to the worth and beauty of committed marital love, and to add our best wishes to the words which shall unite Drace and Jessa in marriage. The commitment that the two of you are about to make is the most important commitment that two people can make, you are about to create something new, the marriage relationship, an entity that never ends. As you stand here today, are you now prepared to begin this commitment to one another? Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?



DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, so Augustus finishes the vows. Drace and Jessa kiss. Clapping and much rejoicing.

CLESCET

(Clescet is generally distracted around happy people.)



VALEROS

Slip her the tongue!

FOPPISH DALLEN

(Dallen leans toward Drace...) There's no resurrection spell to bring you back from this....

DUNGEON MASTER

Maavu approaches each of you in turn and hands you a flyer scrawled on parchment.



MAAVU

I hope I can count on each of you to attend.

But not all are attending with political agendas...



LORD VHALANTRU

Congratulations, Drace. I suppose this means your adventuring days are over?

DRACE

Well... for the time being. We will see what the lady will allow.



LADY THIFRANE

And Lady Jessa, congratulations. This was a beautiful ceremony.

MRS. JESSA ARLICA

Thank you.

LORD VHALANTRU

Hello – Clescet, isn't it? You are new to the Chultan House?



CLESCET

Yes, I am new here.

DUNGEON MASTER

Lord Vhalantru appraises Clescet. Clescet, roll Sense Motive.

Clescet rolls: 1d20+2 => 14 + 2 = 16

DUNGEON MASTER

Clescet, you've seen this look in people's eyes before. It's the same one rogues have when they're casing a place or treasure chest and wondering if it will be useful or not.

CLESCET

I return the look, wondering if his interest will be worth something.

DUNGEON MASTER

lol

LORD VHALANTRU

Well met. I am sure we will see you around.

Before long, Jenya approaches Dallen...

JENYA

Dallen, before you and the others leave, I'd like a word. Alek Tercivel is still missing.

Dallen nods, but is soon distracted by the Lord Mayor and his retinue...



JIL

Well, hello again, handsome.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Wow, what a pleasant surprise Lord Mayor. I did not intend to see you or your lovely um... assistant at the wedding, what being busy and all.



LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

I attend all of Cauldron's nobles' weddings. What kind of wedding would it be without my blessing?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Ah, yes... I keep forgetting the lovely bride is dipping beneath her status on this fine day.

LORD VHALANTRU

I heard you destroyed a demilich, Dallen?

LADY THIFRANE

Most impressive. One of the Lords of Four?

FOPPISH DALLEN

I did not defeat a demilich alone. It was yet another joint effort of the members of the Chultun house.

LADY THIFRANE

Well, either way, most impressive.



FOPPISH DALLEN

While I am bringing it up—we have seen a large increase in membership these last couple weeks... perhaps it has to do with such an unsafe state of affairs within Cauldron.

LORD VHALANTRU

Ah, yes. I met one of your latest Chultun House members here, Clescet.

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

The Blue Duke's mercenaries will handle the rabble.

FOPPISH DALLEN

The Rabble? So distant from those who give you office and purpose? I would be wary of distancing myself so much from those who looked to you as a leader...

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

Sometimes people require a firmer hand.

TERSEON SKELLERANG

Well said, my lord.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Well, I have seen many a pirate captain clench hard the fine grains of sand... only to come up empty handed.

CLESCET

Agreed, Lord Mayor. As one of the ones "in power" around here, one must be firm.



ORENILLUS

A firm hand should be adhered to firm morals, sir.

LORD MAYOR SEVEREN

Ahem. Well. I see that most of the others are clearing out. If you will excuse me.

LORD VHALANTRU

Always a pleasure, Dallen.

JIL

See you around, handsome.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Later, beautiful. Keep these men in line...



TERSEON SKELLERANG

I would think twice about attending Maavu's "meeting."

The nobles leave.

ORENILLUS

The people may have need of protection, it seems.

Dallen continues walking around, passing by the Stormblades...



FOPPISH DALLEN

Dallen looks over the four and turns up his nose.



TODD VANDERBORN

Pirate scum.



CORA LATHENMIRE

Now, now, we're here to support a fellow noble.

FOPPISH DALLEN

(Dallen stares with dark and icy eyes.)



ANNAH TASKERHILL

Come, Stormblades. Perhaps we should be off.

TODD VANDERBORN

There should be laws.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Why? You can just take credit for our next achievement.

The Stormblades leave.

CLESCET

(Clescet likes nobles. They have deep pockets and loose morals.)

Dallen wanders over to talk to his oldest allies in Cauldron...



FOPPISH DALLEN

Thank you, Fario, Fellian, and Sheshen from taking time from your endeavors to attend this joyous day and one that will be remembered forever by the Chultan House and its members.



SHENSEN

Thank you for inviting us.



FARIO

Now we head to Redgorge. The orc tribes have been silent since their moot.

FELLIAN

There have been rumblings in the jungles that the fire giant Skaithen has been gaining more power and followers. Since he conquered the Keep at Alderweg, he is viewed by the orcs as some sort of god.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Great...

SHENSEN

We hope the rumors are not as alarming as they seem. At least this pause in frequent attacks has given the Redgorge militia a much-needed reprieve.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Has he attempted to move or take anymore lands or is he just acquiring more bodies for his hoard? I just purchas'd a townhouse in Redgorge... let's hope that gold wasn't wasted...

FELLIAN

That's what we intend to find out. But when the Black Fangs Tribe called the moot a few weeks back, apparently Skaithen was attending.

ORENILLIUS

I heard about your previous encounter with this Fire Giant. I should point out that I am skilled in the Mass Enlarge spell. Perhaps a handful of barbarians?

FOPPISH DALLEN

I wish we could have finished him off when we had the chance...



CELESTE

You may still get that chance.

After everyone else leaves, the group finally heads to Jenya to see what it was she wished to speak to Dallen about...



JENYA

I'm sorry to turn the matter serious after such a joyous occasion, but I am worried about Alek Tercivel. He still has not returned to Cauldron.

I communed with Tyr, and I received this cryptic message about his whereabouts:

"Late on the path of justice, trapped between glass and stone, he weeps where many can see him, but he can only see himself."

Before he left, he had just returned from an expedition, deep in the jungles. That is when the Stormblades placed Keygan and Orak on trial.

FOPPISH DALLEN

(Dallen grits his teeth at their mention.)



JENYA

The state of Cauldron angered him so greatly, he was determined to challenge Terseon to a duel. But then suddenly, late one night, he hurried to sell off the treasure he had acquired, and said he had been contacted by angels, and was needed for an urgent mission. "Three angels of terrifying beauty" he said. I haven't heard from him since.



ORENILLIUS

Hmmm... Any clues as to his direction?

JENYA

None, though I think it was in the same area he was before. He had not finished his exploration of the place.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Could it have been an illusion that sent him off before he could challenge Terseon?

DUNGEON MASTER

Jenya shrugs.

FOPPISH DALLEN

The path of justice? Do you know where he was before?

JENYA

Only that it was jungle, and that he had brought back some treasure. We did not have time to discuss.

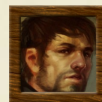
FOPPISH DALLEN

This whole gods-forsaken peninsula is a jungle punctuated by rotting swamps and impassable mountains.



CLESCET

"The path to justice"... are there any prisons around there?

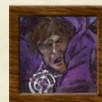


DUNJUN

This whole realm is a prison.

JENYA

Just our dungeons...



RUPHOS

And the Demonskar.

JENYA

True. And the Demonskar.

FOPPISH DALLEN

(Dallen grimaces.) I have had about all I can take of talks of demons.... but if this is our best bet.



ORENILLIUS

I am a somewhat accomplished demon banisher. Perhaps I can be of use?

JENYA

If demons are truly involved, we welcome your help.

ORENILLIUS

I am eager to be of assistance to a just cause. And who is this Terseon?



DEANNA

Terseon Skellerang is the Captain of the City Guard. He is descended of Cauldron's founding nobles, like Alek.

JENYA

Yes. Which means he is vulnerable to the Law of Peers.

ORENILLIUS

Could he hold a clue to the paladin's whereabouts?

ORENILLIUS

Could he hold a clue to the paladin's whereabouts?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Terseon wouldn't help us... he would just meet us with resistance and then we'd clue him into the fact we are searching for him.

ORENILLIUS

Ah.

CLESCET

(to Dallen) I apologize for my ignorance, but is there some value in searching for this Alek?

FOPPISH DALLEN

Not if you mean reward. But he might be the best shot for true justice in this wretched town.

RUPHOS

Everyone knows Terseon is a puppet of the Lord Mayor.

ORENILLIUS

This city seems to be short on true law.

DEANNA

Unless you count an army of half-orc mercenaries, I think I'd agree.

FOPPISH DALLEN

Oh, it's true law... when law is bent to the will of those who wield it.

JENYA

If you can find Alek, bring him back, our church would be most grateful.

FOPPISH DALLEN

We will do our best.

The group then waits for the coming night to attend Maavu's meeting at the town hall...



MAAVU

Thank you all for coming. As you know, we have recently been subject to many new laws that were not voted on or even discussed with the public.



AUGUSTUS

Honored by the invitation to your gathering...a bit of music and some wine would be a nice upgrade though. A bit drab isn't it?

DUNGEON MASTER

townsfolk_12 looks at the giant cleric. Blinks.

MAAVU

Most of these laws have to do with taxes – taxes that are going to pay for a half-orc army for our “protection.” But instead of protecting, we are forced to live in our homes like prisoners, with these ruffians behaving more like tax collectors than guards!

CLESCET

(Clescet studies the nearest guard for 3 rounds... then looks at the next one.)

MAAVU

Furthermore, I have it on good authority that the Paladin of Tyr, Alek Tercival, personally challenged the captain of the city guard, Terseon Skellerang, to a duel according to the Law of Peers... But the council has not made this challenge public, which in itself is against the law!



DUNGEON MASTER

People in the room are murmuring. Getting angrier as Maavu speaks. Hollering out their own instances of injustice. Maavu goes on, and they start to get riled up.

ORENILLIUS

This is becoming less orderly. I do not approve.

DALLEN

(Dallen attempts to shout over the growing din) Maavu? Maavu?



DUNJUN

(To the crowd) Quiet! Let the man speak!

YOUNG MAN

I say we kill them! Kill all the damn orcs!

MAAVU

No... no one is calling for violence... Yes Dallen?

DALLEN

May I approach?

MAAVU

Yes.

DALLEN

(Dallen leans in and speaks in hushed tone...) I do not think it wise to incite the commoners.

YOUNG MAN

Let's hang them from our malachite walls!

CLESCET

(Clescet thinks some killing would be fun.)

MAAVU

They are getting a bit –

ORENILLIUS

(Cast *prestidigitation* to make myself loud.) SILENCE! Keep this orderly, good folks! This is not a riot!

YOUNG MAN

Says the foreigner! Meanwhile, they take our gold! They took the food out of our mouths!



SGT. SKYLAR LEWIS

That's it! Maavu, you are under arrest for disturbing the peace!

CLESCET

(Clescet studies Sgt. Skylar...)

ASSASSINS

For those maybe unfamiliar with the assassin class, and why Clescet's studying everyone is so amusing, note this class feature: *"If an assassin studies his victim for 3 rounds and then makes a sneak attack with a melee weapon that successfully deals damage, the sneak attack has the additional effect of possibly either paralyzing or killing the target (assassin's choice)."*

DUNJUN

Whoever said violence doesn't solve anything...wasn't a very good problem solver.

DALLEN

(Dallen turns and takes the podium.) Hold on, everyone –

SGT. SKYLAR LEWIS

Guards, arrest Maavu!

DALLEN

For what?

YOUNG MAN

Kill them all! Kill them all!

ORENILLIUS

(Cast *hold person* on the Young Man. DC 20.)

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+2 => 12 + 2 = 14

DUNGEON MASTER

He stops—frozen.



ORENILLIUS

I SAID SILENCE!

DALLEN

Try and calm the crowd down.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll Diplomacy.

DALLEN

I have the soapbox! This is getting out of hand...

Dallen rolls: « 1d20+charisma+7-2 = 9 + 4 + 7 - 2 = 18
»-2 for being marked

DUNJUN

(Dunjun leans back in his chair. Amused at the spectacle.)

Orenillius rolls: 1d20-2 => 17 - 2 = 15

CLESCET

(Clescet sees no value in taking either side.)

SGT. SKYLAR LEWIS

I have my orders! (He leaps up onto a table and draws his sword.)

DALLEN

Stand down Sgt. You do not want this, nor do we.

The Diplomacy and Intimidate rolls don't go so well—the crowd does not calm, and it explodes into a full-scale riot!

SGT. SKYLAR LEWIS

You stand down! Men – arrest Maavu!



HALF-ORC MERCENARY

With pleasure!

ORENILLIUS

(to folk) I advise you all clear out!

DALLEN

(Dallen lowers his head.)

DUNGEON MASTER

Maavu suddenly flings out his hand – *magic missiles* streak past Skylar's head, seeming to strike the air next to Orenillius!

SGT. SKYLAR LEWIS

Did you see that?? He tried to kill me! But he missed! Bring me his head!

ORENILLIUS

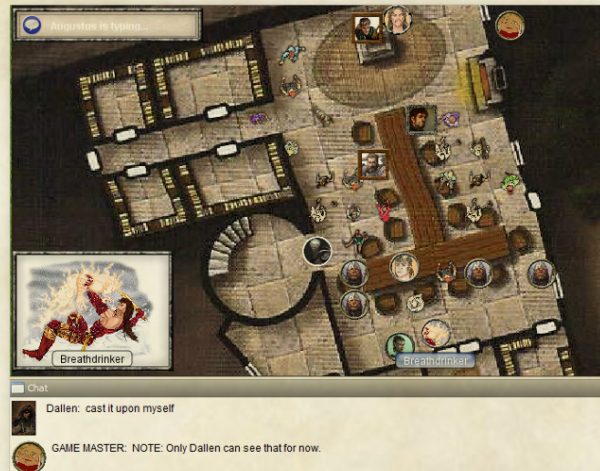
Magic missiles do not miss...

MAAVU

Not you – behind –

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll for initiative!



DALLEN

Dig out my *see invisibility wand*. Cast it upon myself. ((Is this seriously a time when we could use a bard? Everyone write this historical moment down in your RPG diaries!!!))

DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen sees a breath drinker! (Only Dallen can see it so far.)

ORENILLIUS

((I'm webbing these unruly bastards))

CLESCET

((anyone who threatens me gets stabbed.))

DUNGEON MASTER

The crowd drags Skylar down. Raining fists. His half-orcs are having a hell of a time getting through.

MAAVU

This did not go well...

DALLEN

I don't think it was supposed to.



AUGUSTUS

I'm with you! This is the worst party I have ever been to! We want want mead! We want mutton!

MAAVU

Dallen, I must retreat to Redgorge. Contact my superiors there

DALLEN

We have a safehouse, and Drace is on his way there as well.

DUNGEON MASTER

Maavu nods – climbs out the window.



ORENILLIUS

(Orenillus casts *web* on the mob...)

The web from the elf wizard sticks the mob—along with the sergeant and his half-orcs—firmly in place. The PCs make short work of the breath drinker after that.

SGT. SKYLAR LEWIS

Remove this webbing at once! Maavu is getting away!

AUGUSTUS

(Augustus starts singing a song about battle and good drink in his deep, gravelly voice.) Augustus sings, “My cheeks are raw, and my feet are sore! Time to relax with some drink and a whore!”

SGT. SKYLAR LEWIS

I will see to it you head to the gallows for this!

ORENILLIUS

Sir, you should be better prepared for extra dimensional sedition.



DALLEN

I doubt you will have your position long enough to back that claim.

SGT. SKYLAR LEWIS

You speak of Alek Tercival and his challenge? Hah!

DUNJUN

(Dunjun throws his steamo down on the table and takes a seat.)

The PCs decide to let the spell wear off on its own and quickly rush into the night, striking out toward the Chultan House. But they soon come upon a burning inn...



DUNGEON MASTER

This is Minutia's Board, a popular inn, and where most of the half-orcs have been staying.

ORENILLIUS

Uncivilized populace.



DUNJUN

This does not bode well...

DUNGEON MASTER

The half-orcs seem agitated.

AUGUSTUS

(Augustus thinks about all the lost ale and food in the inn...) Tragedy!

CLESCET

(Clescet studies Mercenary Captain...)

ORENILLIUS

Did anyone see the arsonists?



ROKWKO, MERCENARY CAPTAIN

Them! (He points at the burning inn.)

DUNJUN

I scan the surrounds to see if anyone looking on is smiling.

ORENILLIUS

Me too.



AUGUSTUS

The inn burnt itself down? Is that what you are saying?

ROKWKO, MERCENARY CAPTAIN

No, you fool—THEM!



DUNGEON MASTER

Now you notice that the fire isn't just fire—it's two huge fire elementals

DUNJUN

Oh. Ok. Those guys did it.

ORENILLIUS

Ah. That would do it.

AUGUSTUS

Welp... See ya later!

DUNGEON MASTER

LOL Roll for initiative!

The battle rages for a few battles, but through Dallen's Dexterity-sapping cold magic, Orenillus's enlarge person and dismissal spells, Clescet's flanking attacks, and some bashing from Dunjun and Augustus, the two fire elementals are soon extinguished.

ORENILLIUS

((Ending enlarge spell before Clescet kills us all and takes our loot.))

ROKWKO, MERCENARY CAPTAIN

A painted woman used a scroll to summon those demons. Rokwko, Mercenary Captain: She said it was a message from Maavu!



DALLEN

Why would Maavu do this?

ROKWKO, MERCENARY CAPTAIN

I don't know! I don't care! But the human will pay!

DALLEN

I say he did not do this.

ORENILLIUS

It appears someone is stirring up trouble. I wager the Mayor.

DALLEN

Well of course it was that tart Jil that did it.

MILOC MINUTIA

If it was him... he's rich... he can pay for my inn!

ORENILLIUS

I fear we will have to proceed through the proper channels.

DALLEN

It wasn't him. (To Miloc) You can set up shop in our Chultan House; we have a brewer and bartender to assist you. It will provide you a place to stay, safety and an income if you would be willing Miloc?

MILOC MINUTIA

I...

THE BLUE DUKE

IF IT IS MAAVU...



THE BLUE DUKE

...he will pay dearly.



THE BLUE DUKE

I have 5,000 gp for anyone who will bring him to justice.

ORENILLIUS

Justice? Are you a Magister?

THE BLUE DUKE

I am the Blue Duke. I am in charge of this town's security now.

DALLEN

(Dallen turns back to Miloc.) What say you?

MILOC MINUTIA

I... I... I just want to be paid for damages!



CLESCET

Sounds like a fair price to me. Any idea where he is?

ORENILLIUS

Security detail may not be your thing, sir. You WERE staying at this very Inn, correct?

THE BLUE DUKE

(To Clescet) I know not where he is. (To Orenillus.) You are right, elf. As of TONIGHT I am instituting MARTIAL LAW! Now clear this area!

DALLEN

(Dallen looks sidelong at Clescet.) The offer stand until you decline Miloc. Good luck to you.

CLESCET

(To Blue Duke.) Where do I bring his head once I have it?

ORENILLIUS

(Orenillus watches Clescet.)

THE BLUE DUKE

To Terseon Skellerang at the city barracks. Northwest corner of the town. And if you bring me his head and spare us a costly trial... 10,000 gp.

ORENILLIUS

Oh, great.

CLESCET

(Clescet smiles.)

ORENILLIUS

(Orenillus watches Clescet drool.)

AUGUSTUS

So much for justice.



DALLEN

(Turns to the Blue Duke.) At least you realize it may not have been him.

AUGUSTUS

Ugh. Court is the worst place in the world.



ORENILLIUS

Do you have any evidence? That which is not circumstantial?

DALLEN

Someone's baseless accusation is enough in this town.

ORENILLIUS

Perhaps I banished the wrong Demon.

The group then regroups at The Chultan House to discuss their next move...

DALLEN

I am not risking my employees fighting giants. They are commoners, messengers and cooks. Not soldiers

CLESCET

So, I take it nobody likes the idea of helping the local law for some serious coin?



ORENILLIUS

We need soldiers...



DALLEN

(To Clescet.) They are not the local law. They are mercenaries.

ORENILLIUS

Technically they have writ of authority from the Mayor, correct?

CLESCET

I thought that's all the local law was around here, right?

DALLEN

Maavu is a partner in this endeavor here at the Chultan House and I will stand by his innocence.



ORENILLIUS

If you know where he is, perhaps you should keep that information secret, for now... (Orenillus's looks pointedly at Clescet.)



CLESCET

I was unaware of Maavu's affiliation with our group. Then perhaps the person who needs his head lost is the Blue Duke. Dead men part with their payments quite easily as well.

ORENILLIUS

(LOL at the Clescet Method.) I myself cannot harbor legal fugitives, but then, this is not my house, is it?

DALLEN

The current authority has abused its powers beyond their rights. There was to be a challenge to that regime. They saw to it that challenge was negated. We are going to find Alec and help restore proper order.

CLESCET

And separating the Blue Duke from his 10k gold would assist in this endeavor, correct?

ORENILLIUS

((Dallen, roll a Diplomacy against me so i don't have to be a prick.))

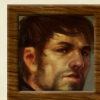
Dallen rolls: « 1d20+charisma+7-2 = 12 + 4 + 7 - 2 = 21
»-2 for being marked.

ORENILLIUS

Very well, good sir. I appreciate your concern for your town. We must install a more proper authority here.

DALLEN

I won't lie to any of you. Maavu and Alec would greatly benefit my aims here in Cauldron and across the Chultan Peninsula, but beyond the personal gain you all have witnessed first-hand the abuses of power today.



DUNJUN

It was very clear.

ORENILLIUS

I do not approve of framing an innocent man.

DALLEN

Since we left the church we have seen attempts to drag Maavu's name through the mud. It is without mistake it is the current power that is doing this. None of those actions are protected under any laws.

ORENILLIUS

Then I will destroy them and their households.

DALLEN

I fear in spite of attempting to do this through the challenge, that may be the only way.

ORENILLIUS

Then we must retrieve this Paladin. (Orenillius looks at Clescet.) What about our bloodthirsty friend?

DALLEN

Well, it appears his thirst is sated by coin more than blood... and I assure you Maavu has more than the Blue Duke...

CLESCET

Blood appears to be only thing people are willing to pay for around here.

ORENILLIUS

Too true.

The group discusses their next move...



DUNGEON MASTER

Any further ideas of how to get clues for Alek Tercival's whereabouts?

DALLEN

Go to the place he sold his equipment?

They head out to Tygot's Things...



TYGOT

Hello! Welcome to Tygot's Old Things! I'm Tygot! Can I help you find anything?



ORENILLIUS

Do you have anything in the flavor of tracking or finding lost heros?

TYGOT

Well, I have many artifacts from across the peninsula... let's see... *mumble mumble*

DALLEN

Alek Tercival was here. He sold you all his belongings.

TYGOT

Ah! Yes, he always sells me things he gets out playing in the jungle! Did he send you? Do you have something interesting for old Tygot?

DALLEN

He is gone. We are looking for him.

TYGOT

Did you try the Church of Torm? He sleeps there, you know.

CLESCET

Did he mention anything about where he was going when he was here?

DALLEN

I do know. We have spoken with Jenya and we've been to the church.

TYGOT

(To Clescet.) Going? No. He said Cauldron was in need of a strong leader. I said what about Lord Vhalantru? And he laughed in my face. I like it when he laughs.

DALLEN

Where did he get his items he sold you?

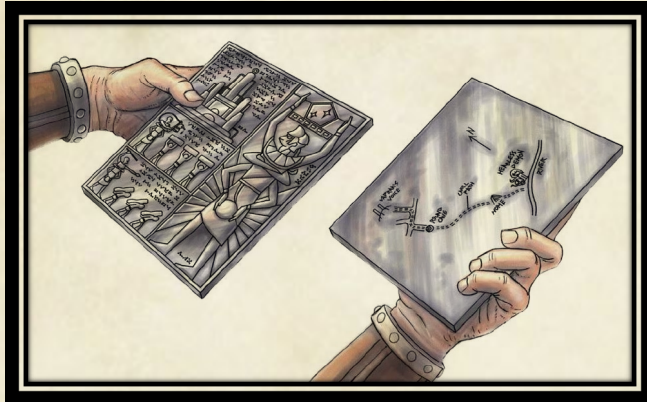
TYGOT

Um... the jungle. Would you like to look through them?

DALLEN

Yes.

One item in particular stands out to the group...



TYGOT

And here's a marble statue of the mythical **Crater Lake Monster** ... I can let this go for a very reasonable price...

DALLEN

How much for this plate?

TYGOT

That is 400 gp.

The group is not impressed with this highway robbery, and begin to haggle. They eventually make an agreement—200 gp, but they have to always sell their treasure to Tygot, who promises to always pay full market value for their items—even their magical weapons and armor. Dallen, who hadn't been able to find any buyer this entire campaign who was willing to go higher than 50%, becomes downright giddy over the prospect. They then take the silver plate back to the Chultan House to examine it...

DUNGEON MASTER

Does anyone have Knowledge (history) or (local)?

Orenillius rolls: 1d20+11 => 18 + 11 = 29



ORENILLIUS

I know my history.

DUNGEON MASTER

"Vaprak's Voice" is the name of a spellweaver ruin near what is known today as the Demonskar. The river must be the river running south past Redgorge.

ORENILLIUS

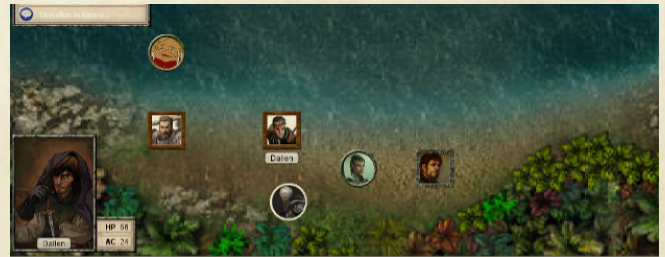
Bingo.

They head out, and after a four-hour hike, come upon the statue mentioned on the map...



CLESCET

(Clescet pulls out his bow and aims it at the strange looking character across the river... or is that a statue?)



DUNGEON MASTER

Statue.

CLESCET

(Clescet puts away his bow. Hopes nobody noticed.)

DALLEN

Clescet I have 3 *potions of invisibility* and a *Bodak's eye* if you are interested?

CLESCET

What's a *Bodak's eye*?

Dallen explains that it grants the user the ability to use the bodak's death attack once per day. The only catch is, the person has to pluck out one of his or her own eyes first to fit it in.

CLESCET

(Clescet pulls out his kukri and opens his hand for the eye.)

DUNGEON MASTER

They found it in the tomb of a demilich. So it's probably safe.

DALLEN

Probably... It's been in my pocket so take the lint off first.

CLESCET

(Clescet dusts off the eye, jams the kukri in his left eye socket twists once, grimaces, rips it out, then shoves the Bodak eye in to replace it.)

DUNGEON MASTER

Nice!

ORENILLIUS

Wow. Humans will go to any measures.

DALLEN

(Dallen looks on in awe....)

CLESCET

I need to try it out on someone...

DALLEN

(Dallen shakes his head.) I don't trust you at all.

DUNGEON MASTER

The pain is excruciating, but once the bodak eye is in, the pain instantly subsides and you feel normal again.

ORENILLIUS

Clescet is a stone-cold bastard.



And that's where we left off! Until next time!

Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Dunjun has connected.

Augustus has connected.

Clescet has connected.

Orenillus has connected.

DUNGEON MASTER

I'm assuming you guys are going to ford the river?

The party does...

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, everyone roll Perception!



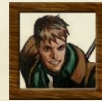
DUNGEON MASTER

Arrows leap from bows concealed in the brush! One hits Clescet and one hits Dallen.

They have stumbled upon a site sacred to several gnoll tribes. After defeating the gnolls, they inspect the headless statue of a glabrezu. After using their Knowledge skills to see if it's the same as the Lord of the Demonskar, they discover...

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay. You're pretty sure this is the same demon, and this is some sort of shrine. You also remember hearing that various gnoll tribes have fought over this area, believing they can curry favor from the demon. The trail continues through the jungle from here.



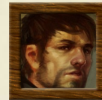
DALLEN

Shove the statue over.

DUNGEON MASTER

It collapses in a heap.

The party follows the path through the vine-choked jungle—deeper and deeper into the green depths. Finally, the cleric Augustus loudly announces that he needs to stop to take a leak. While the others rest weary feet and slap buzzing mosquitos off their necks, Dunjun hears a noise in a nearby cave. Upon investigating, he discovers it's the lair of a giant, monstrous sloth!



DUNJUN

Here we go!



ORENILLIUS

It looks brutish.

DALLEN

You show that wild animal, minding its business in its own lair.... probably a freaking vegetarian too. I object in the name of Lini!

DUNGEON MASTER

lol

Despite Dallen's conscientious objections, the party quickly slaughters the sloth. That's when they notice an

angelic
brush,



CLESCET

(Clescet studies angelic being.)

DUNGEON MASTER

LOL

ORENILLIUS

LOL



DUNGEON MASTER

She begins to speak...

NIDRAMA

Powerful forces of chaos and evil are afoot. I dare not remain here for long lest my presence attract the attention of those forces. Yet I could not sit by and watch you march into danger without warning you. The Lord of the Demonskar knows of your approach, and even now his minions prepare for your arrival.

They shall use deceit and treachery against you, just as they have done with Alek Tercival before you. You must remain resolute.

I have no aid to offer you but knowledge. In ages past, I provided to Surabar Spellmason a powerful weapon to assist him in his conflict with the Lord of the Demonskar. This was ALAKAST, a quarterstaff infused with an undying hatred of the fiends of the outer rifts.

Unfortunately, Alakast was stolen centuries ago by tomb robbers. Yet do not despair, for it is fated that Alakast should be wielded again against the Lord of the Demonskar. It has found its way to you, and all that needs to be done is for you to claim it.

Seek Alakast in the lair of my false sisters, beyond the watchful eyes of the north.

This is all I am at liberty to say... I wish you wel in your travails, heroes. We will speak again...



ORENILLIUS

A staff... hurrah!

DALLEN

Step out of the bushes at the end of her lengthy monologue....

ORENILLIUS

Thank you, divine being.

DALLEN

Hold up.... we are trying to find a friend... and you are presuming we intend to defeat the Lord of the Demonskar?

NIDRAMA

So it is written. To save Alek Tercival, you will need to face the Lord of the Demonskar.

CLESCET

Where is this lair of your false sisters?

DALLEN

: Is that a fancy way of saying sister in law?

NIDRAMA

Continue on this path. You will reach the place known as Vaprak's Voice by nightfall.

ORENILLIUS

The lord is a glabrezu?

DALLEN

Presumably.

ORENILLIUS

I can take him.

DALLEN

It's been years. Perhaps he's been usurped...

CLESCET

(Clescet mumbles something about Augustus being sober by then...)

NIDRAMA

That is all. Best of luck to you all...

The party heads deeper into the jungle, heading for the place the angel called "Vaprak's Voice..."

DUNGEON MASTER

The path led to a large pipe running through a rocky hillside. And this is the other end of that pipe – and Vaprak's Voice:



CLESCET

(They are quickly attacked by the guardian—a demonic steam mephit...) It needs a DC 15 Fort save, or die.

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+7 => 5 + 7 = 12

ORENILLIUS

Dunt!

DUNGEON MASTER

Well, that was easy!

CLESCET

(Clescet likes his new eye.)

So Clescet used his once-a-day power... A decision the assassin would regret later, when far more dangerous opponents threaten the group's survival But for now they bask in their victory and search for a way inside...



CLESCET

I vote we follow the left wall.

DUNJUN

Agreed.

ORENILLIUS

Tunnel left, strange markings north.



DALLEN

Bend bars/lift gates!

CLESCET

(Checks for traps...)

DUNGEON MASTER

No traps.

DALLEN

Is it locked?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yes.

CLESCET

I could probably pick it.

DUNGEON MASTER

You don't see any keyhole.

CLESCET

Oh...

ORENILLIUS

Brawn it is, then.

DALLEN

Can I see anything in the room beyond? A lever or switch...?

DUNGEON MASTER

You see a winch.

ORENILLIUS

If necessary, I can *dimension door* through and open it.

DUNGEON MASTER

Orenillus, roll Perception for your familiar.

Orenillus rolls: 1d20+12 => 6 + 12 = 18

DUNGEON MASTER

It smells... something...

ORENILLIUS

Ok... which direction?

DUNGEON MASTER

North. Past this gate. Close.

CLESCET

Is there a lever on the winch? Is it mage-handable? Does someone have that?

DALLEN

I do, of course. But it's too heavy.

ORENILLIUS

5lb limit.

DALLEN

What else can we see in this room?

DUNGEON MASTER

Just what you can actually see on the map. That spoke thing in the middle is the winch.

**DALLEN**

...and some cannon balls?

DUNGEON MASTER

A pile of boulders. Or "large rocks," if you will.

ORENILLIUS

A stockpile of boulders?

DUNGEON MASTER

Yup.

ORENILLIUS

Giants, anyone?

DALLEN

Okay, I have an idea. Unpack some rope. Tie a knot. A loop preferable. And mage hand just the end of it around the winch a handful of times.

DUNGEON MASTER

Nice.

ORENILLIUS

Very nice.

DALLEN

Then hook it to one of the pegs and pull.

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay. It turns a quarter turn. The gate shifts... lifts enough to crawl under on the first pull.

ORENILLIUS

Clescet is stealthed?

CLESCET

Sure. Stealth on inside...

**CLESCET**

Does it see me?

**DUNGEON MASTER**

Muggo walks up to the winch, scratching its head as you give it a second pull.

DALLEN

I boldly walk out.

MUGGO

Huh??

DALLEN

Skaithen has sent us here and you lock us out??

CLESCET

(I pause, studying the giant, waiting for result of negotiations...)

Dallen passes his Bluff test...

MUGGO

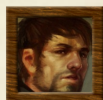
Oh. You come to see sisters?

DALLEN

Why else would we be here, fool!

MUGGO

Okay. Follow Muggo.



DUNJUN

Stay frosty, people...

The heroes follow the clueless hill giant into Vaprah's Voice...

DALLEN

Skaithen will not be pleased when we report you were not at your post.

MUGGO

Everybody, look! Skaithen sent puny humans!

ORENILLIUS

This could be a bad idea...

DALLEN

Yeah... or brilliant!



TIBOR

Can we eat them?

POGUS

Pogus hungry!

DALLEN

CAN YOU EAT US!!!!!!

GOLOT

I want the big one!



AUGUSTUS

I don't blame you... I'm delicious.

MUGGO

No, they are here to see sisters. Maybe we eat later. Come.

DALLEN

We are dread pirates. Skaithen's allies to take the coasts and secure his rule.

CLESCET

((Thinks this is a bad idea.))

Now with more hill giants among them, the party continues deeper into the lair...



Chat
Augustus: Tis not often I feel small
Orenillius: Isn't there a saying..." never trust a pirate?"

DUNJUN

Oh, look. Ettins.

ETTIN 2

Argh!

MUGGO

Err! Grrr Skaithen grah!

ETTIN 2

Oh...

ORENILLIUS

I speak giant.

DUNGEON MASTER

They said, "You shit on our floor again!" "Not now, they're from Skaithen." "Oh."

DALLEN

(Dallen smiles wickedly at his allies while his heart is nearing explosive beating.)

MUGGO

Come.

AUGUSTUS

'Tis not often I feel small.

ORENILLIUS

Jesus, it's crowded in here.

Deeper into the dungeon they go—now with ettins following along!



DUGOBRAS

Did I hear my brother's name?



DUGOBRAS

ORENILLIUS

We are going to get killed...

DUGOBRAS

Who knows my brother?

DALLEN

I do.

DUGOBRAS

He sent you?

DALLEN

Yes.

DUNGEON MASTER

Roll Bluff again.

Dallen rolls: « 1d20+charisma+7+1-2 = 18 + 4 + 7 + 1 - 2 = 28 »marked -2 to bluff/Fast Talker +1

Dungeon Master rolls: 1d20+1 => 5 + 1 = 6

DALLEN

lol Does he carry me?

DUGOBRAS

What does he want? He is supposed to be attacking Redgorge.

DALLEN

He is attacking Redgorge.

DUGOBRAS

We have dealt with the paladin. Is that what the Blue Duke wants to hear?

AUGUSTUS

There once was a pretty Ettin! Fairest in the land! 2 heads as big as boulders! And tits that crushed the land!

DUGOBRAS

Tell him everything is fine.

DALLEN

He sent us here to gather reports from progress in the Demonskar.

TIBOR

They want to see the sisters!

DUGOBRAS

Shut up, Tibor. What progress? Do you mean Nabatharon? The demon is working for us for now.

DALLEN

I will note in my report that you are having a hard time keeping your soldiers in order.

DUGOBRAS

Follow us.



ORENILLIUS

(I can lock out the mob with *wall of force* and we could kill the leaders. Just saying.)

DALLEN

(That's not a bad idea.)

ORENILLIUS

(I bet the sisters are going to bring this down on us.)

GAFLON

HOLD!



TIBOR

Look! From Skaithen!

:



GAFLON

Who are you?

DALLEN

Who am I?

TRIBATA

He is Dallen Yradwric from Sasserine, you fools.

ORENILLIUS

(Orenillus looks up at the giant in tunnel.) Ok, *wall of force* time.

AUGUSTUS

I am Agustus! Faithful to the lady Lliara. Lover of food, drink, and dance!

DALLEN

I am Raylean Salmaer.

CLESCET

I think the gig is up.

ORENILLIUS

Dallen, you have any more lip magic? (Tosses up wall of force...)

AUGUSTUS

And this...this is my girl Bertha (draws his greatclub)

DUNGEON MASTER

Okay, it's up. Roll for initiative!

SMINELPA

Destroy them. They are here to save the paladin!

AUGUSTUS

(Augustus sings a hair-metal ballad prayer causing everyone's hair to grow out and pants to change into animal print spandex. His allies feel invigorated while the enemies are crippled with jealousy!)

The "three false sisters" turn out to be hags! An epic battle ensues. The wall of force keeps the hill giants and ettins trapped in the hall, and although they have a very close call thanks to the three hags' dominate ability, they manage to wipe everyone in the room out JUST as the wall of force collapses...

Then Orenillus and Dallen team up on the hallway with black tentacles, wall of fire, and numbing sphere!***

ORENELLIUS

(Orenillus watches as flaming tentacles squeeze some Hell into giants!)

DALLEN

Foggy, flaming tentacles!

The surviving ettins and hill giants decide to flee, leaving our heroes to lick their wounds... and collect treasure!



DUNGEON MASTER

This is a good place to stop! Nearly to the Lord of the Demonskar... until next time!

Server started.

Dallen Yadwrick has connected.

Dunjun has connected.

Clescet has connected.

Orenillus has connected.

After licking their wounds from the last session, our heroes head deeper into Vaprak's Voice, coming upon a room with a mirror portal...



DUNGEON MASTER

The mirror shimmers like a reflection pool, showing a room beyond... with Alex Tercival in it.

The group steps through the mirror...



CLESCET

(Clescet turns around and touches the wall he came through to test for permeability...)

DUNGEON MASTER

HARD AS STONE.



ORENILLIUS

Hello, Alec. How's things?

DUNJUN

He looks like he is in pretty rough shape...



ALEK TERCIVAL

When... When... When the final cage is shackled...
Cauldron... will burn! Dallen Yadwrick of Sasserine – I
know what you are! Make your choices wisely...

ORENILLIUS

What are you, Dallen?

DALLEN

I am here to bring him back, is what I am.

ALEK TERCIVAL

The thirteen have long waited for madness, and
madness is soon to be released... to release madness,
they must imprison sanity...

ORENILLIUS

(Orenillus edges away.)

DALLEN

Completely nuts.

DUNGEON MASTER

You are reminded of the condition Zenith Splintershield
was in when you found him.



NABTHATORON

Hahahahaha... Fools have fallen right into their trap...
just like they predicted... Do you think we cared about
the paladin?

DALLEN

We cared...

NABTHATORON

You will not leave here alive...



ORENILLIUS

What's our plan?

DALLEN

To leave here alive.

ORENILLIUS

Is Alek functional?

ALEK TERCIVAL

Soon the burning eye will open... Dallen! Dallen!
Beware the unseen mark! Beware the eyes that kill!
Through treachery and deceit shall the true lord fall and
the false lord rule!

NABTHATORON

Welcome... to your doom!



*A battle between the PCs and the Lord of the
Demonskar began! It went many rounds with many
close calls, but in the end, the mighty Nabthatoron was
destroyed!*

DUNGEON MASTER

Dallen swings the magical staff ALAKAST, striking the
terrible Lord of the Demonskar across its hideous face.
There is a deep, blinding FLASH as holy power erupts
from the staff, destroying it, but surrounding
Nabthatoron with burning, fiery energy that lays him
low!



ORBIUS

How unfortunate.

Suddenly, figures blinked into existence all around them!



ORENILLIUS

Great, they all have names.

DALLEN

I had this supsicion you'd show up. We've met before...



CLESCET

(Clescet readies his *boots of teleportation*.)

ALEK TERCIVAL

Gaaah....! (killed)

ORBIUS

We meet again, Dallen. I see you have been making new friends.

DALLEN

Hard not to notice with all those eyes

CLESCET

(Clescet grins at Dallen's zinger.)



EMBRIL

Such trouble. But you served your uses.

ORENILLIUS

What is your goal, great orb?

ORBIUS

For now? Get rid of you.



DYR'RYD

Do you know who we are?

DALLEN

The Cagewrights.

DYR'RYD

Indeed. And you have served us well, but now you grow too dangerous to keep around.

EMBRIL

I'm afraid you are no longer welcome in Cauldron. You are now in a desert several thousand miles away. No city for hundreds of miles in any direction.

ORENILLIUS

Aren't you a noble?

EMBRIL

High Priestess of Kelemvor.

DALLEN

I have a business venture there; I'd be remiss to call it a loss

ORBIUS

Our attack on Redgorge is imminent. The forces you staged there will be wiped out.



THE VEILED LADY

As will your Chultan House.



ARDETH WEBB

It's too bad... I've always had a thing for pirates...



SSYTHAR NAHAZIR

You have a thing for most warm-blooded creatures.

DALLEN

Yeah, that scorpion tattoo is too much for this thing to ever work.



ALURAD

Hahaha!



GAU

Let's go. We have work to be done.

DYR'RYD

Yes. So we depart.

ORENILLIUS

That's right! Off with you!



THEARRYN

Farewell. The Stormblades will be Cauldron's new heroes. They are more easily... manipulated.

The Cagewrights vanish.

DALLEN

I wonder what desert we are in? Perhaps Calimshan in the North...



KAUROPHON

I apologize for their rudeness.



KAUROPHON

My associates are rather short sighted.

ORENILLIUS

Well. Clescet, teleport back to town, get a scroll and we'll all be home by sundown.

KAUROPHON

There is wild magic in this desert. Teleportation spells can be... tricky. Unless you are a master... like me.

DALLEN

This isn't over. You should've sent me to the farthest plane in the cosmos!

KAUROPHON

I am lingering to offer you a bargain...

ORENILLIUS

I'm listening. Waukeen smiles on fair deals.

KAUROPHON

Dallen is the rightful heir of Occipitus. An Abyssal plane torn down from the heavens during a war. The fallen demon lord, now locked away in Carceri, is Adimarchus, the Lord of Madness. Dallen is one of his scions. Bastard child misplaced out of time.

ORENILLIUS

What is your proposal?

KAUROPHON

Only Dallen can complete the Test of the Smoking Eye. If he completes it, with out help, he can bestow upon me the rulership of Demon Lord of Occipitus. If you help me become the Demon Lord, I will send you all back to Cauldron and help you defeat the Cagewrights. For they wish to free Adimarchus, and I cannot allow that, if I have his throne.

DALLEN

And how are we supposed to get to some fallen Abyssal layer?

KAUROPHON

I will take you all.

ORENILLIUS

Sounds fun. You know, I always wanted to visit the Abyss. I hate demons.

KAUROPHON

The feeling is mutual, mortal.

DALLEN

I agree to go to the abyssal plane with you.



DUNGEON MASTER

And that's the end of THE SHACKLED CITY ADVENTURE PATH VOLUME ONE! *Until next time!!!*

The adventure continues...

DOWNLOAD [SHACKLED CITY VOLUME 2!](#)

MORE NERD STUFF

Looking for more homebrew nerd stuff? Check out my Savage Worlds campaign setting, [The Legends of Sinbad!](#)

